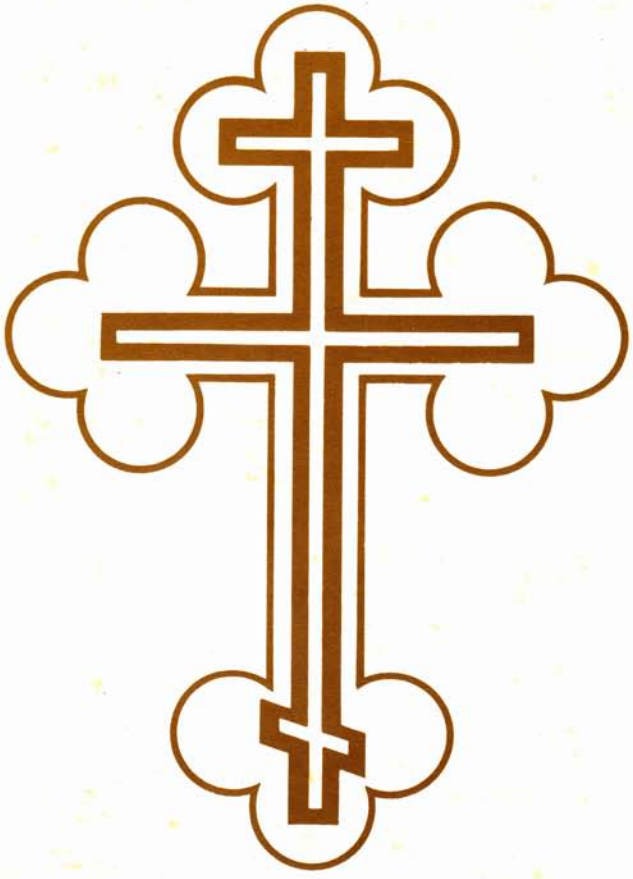
CASIMIR KUCHAREK

OUR FAITH

A BYZANTINE CATECHISM FOR ADULTS



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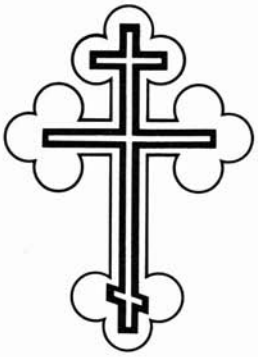

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FOREWORD

If Christ's Church were but a human institution, it would have disappeared without a trace during the persecutions lasting from its beginnings to A.D. 313. The charge made against the followers of Christ because they evaded the pagan emperor cult, was always the same: high treason, punishable by death. There was no comfortable way to be a Christian; the choice was between apostasy or death. They died in droves, these early Christians — hundreds of thousands of them in the first two centuries. Sometimes it seemed the Church would be crushed, utterly destroyed, but it always rose to new life — like its divine Founder.

A new era began in A.D. 313 when Emperor Constantine granted freedom of worship to Christians. With the danger of arrest and execution removed, they came out of hiding, began to organize and build churches. Till then, the forms of Christian worship had been fundamentally the same everywhere,in spite of local variations in details.

As churches organized and flourished during later centuries, Christian leaders could better afford to turn their attention to liturgical matters, ritual and Church law. Definite liturgical patterns incorporating local tradition and customs evolved in the main centers of Christianity, showing marked differences in the way the common faith was expressed in word and action.

These main centers were Rome, Alexandria (Egypt), Jerusalem-Antioch and eventually Byzantium or Constantinople (the Eastern capital of the Greco-Roman Empire). The three Eastern centers gradually evolved daughter — and grand-daughter — Churches or Rites which now show enough differences in ritual, tradition and discipline to warrant separate classification.

Ancient Centers	Intermediate Rites	Present-day Rites
I. Alexandria (Egypt)		Coptic
		Ethiopian
	East Syrian	Syro-Chaldean
		Syro-Malabarese

II. Jerusalem-Antioch	West Syrian	Syro-Antiochian Syro-Malankarese Syro-Maronite
		Armenian
III.	Cappadocian and Constantinopolitan (Byzantium)	
		Byzantine

Albanian	Slav —	Bulgarian
Georgian		Russian
Greek		Ruthenian
Italo-Greek		Ukrainian*
Melkite		Byzantine
Rumanian		

For various reasons in different centuries, nearly all these Eastern Churches or segments of them (except the Maronites and the Italo-Greeks) separated from the Church of Rome. These are called *Orthodox*. The largest break occurred in A.D. 1054, Orthodox Christians have preserved the true sacraments, including the ordination of bishops and priests. Those who remained with Rome or returned to it are called Eastern Rite Catholics or, more specifically, according to their particular denomination, Byzantine Catholics, Byzantine Ukrainian Catholics, Melkite Catholics, etc.

Byzantine Christians, Catholic and Orthodox, are the most numerous of all Eastern Christian groups both world-wide and in North America. Whatever can be said about Byzantine "spirit" and usages generally applies to the other Eastern Christians: they are non-Western, non-Latin. The East received the faith, not as a daughter-church of Rome, but directly from the apostles.

*Segments of other ethnic groups such as the White Russians, Croatians, Slovaks, Hungarians, Macedonians, Estonians, Letts and even some Finns, Chinese, and Japanese observe the Byzantine Rite with only minor variations.

While the faith of Byzantine and Roman Catholicism is fundamentally the same, the expression of it is different. This book deals in detail with those differences in religious practices, liturgical and non-liturgical, in customs, in church discipline and in their underlying mentality and spirituality.

This book is the answer to the pleas of many Byzantine priests, nuns, teachers and parents, both in the United States and Canada, to fulfil the need for a complete Byzantine Catholic catechesis, explaining creed and cult, faith and action.

The presentation is as non-polemical as possible, so that both Catholic and Orthodox would find this book beneficial. Latin Rite Catholics will find it a source of information about another and less well known part of the Church universal.

Eastern terminology is used throughout, except when clarity would be sacrificed (though this may be regretted by liturgical purists). For instance, Byzantine Christians prefer the terms *holy mysteries* to *sacraments* and *lesser mysteries* to *sacramentals* but the more familiar terms are used throughout.

To be effective, religious concepts and words must be adapted to the varying times and cultures. The style of this catechesis is contemporary, and at times somewhat journalistic, especially in presenting historical matter — but great care has been taken to hand on the revealed truths as faithfully and fully as possible.

In matters of faith and morals, we cannot pick and choose, accepting what we like and rejecting what we dislike. Authentic faith and practice are never selective or partial. Our belief must extend to the whole mystery of faith and to each of its elements — otherwise, it means we only trust God sometimes. It was obvious to Simon Peter and the rest of the apostles that God was to be believed always. When he and the others recognized Jesus as the Son of God, they were indeed ready to believe all of Christ's teachings. Peter answered for all of them and, hopefully for all of us: *"Lord, who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we know that you are the Holy One of God" (Jn 6:68-69).*

C.K. Regina, Saskatchewan Christmas 1982

PART ONE
THE HOLY MYSTERY OF THE TRIUNE GOD

CHAPTER I

Our Beliefs

Acknowledging as true whatever someone has told us is belief, human faith. Acknowledging as true whatever Christ-God told us is Christian belief, religious faith.

Faith differs from knowledge. We *know* something if it is proved either by evidence, facts, or reason. We *believe,* on the other hand, simply because someone reliable tells us it is so, without proof. God revealed, told us many truths, and we believe. St. Paul, for example, blames the Romans for their unbelief because they should have known something about God from creation (natural revelation): *''For what can be known about God is perfectly plain to them since God himself has made it plain. Ever since God created the world his everlasting power and deity — however invisible — have been there for the mind to see in the things he has made. That is why such people are without excuse'' (Rm 1:18-21).*

God spoke plainly through the Old Testament prophets. He spoke even more clearly through Jesus Christ in the New. This included both actions and teachings. Revelation is always miraculous in that God directly moved, inspired the prophets or sacred authors to write exactly what he wanted. In a sense, they are instruments which God used to impart his teachings.

The Jews regarded a definite collection of their writings as inspired by God. They were right. Christ confirmed this truth when he said, *''Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. I tell you solemnly, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, shall disappear from the Law until its purpose is achieved'' (Mt 5:17-18).* After he arose from the dead, he appeared to the apostles and told them: *'''Everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms, has to be fulfilled.' He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures'' (Lk 24:44-45).*

How do we know which writings were inspired? Some theologians hold that the apostles themselves taught which books

were inspired and which were not. Others suggest that the determination was made by the Church with God's help

The Sacred Scriptures

The Sacred Scriptures are a collection of seventy-three books written under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Another, perhaps more common name for the Scriptures, is the Bible. The Scriptures are divided into the Old and New Testaments.

The *Old Testament* contains God's revelation to mankind from creation to the time of Christ. For convenience sake, we may divide the Old Testament into: a) The Law, b) The Historical Books, c) The Wisdom Books, and d) The Prophetic Books.

(a) The *Law* (Pentateuch) comprises the first five books of the Bible. Primarily a body of legal doctrine, these books also describe the creation of the world and some of its history as well as the formation of God's people: Abraham and the patriarchs, Moses and the Hebrews in Egyptian captivity, their escape, the Sinai covenant, the reception of the Ten Commandments from God, etc.

(b) *The Historical Books* chronicle additional Jewish history, both religious and secular.

(c) The *Wisdom* (instructional) *Books* strive for understanding and solving the problems of life through human experience. They are poetical and devotional.

(d) The *Prophetic Books* foretell the future history of the Jews and, especially the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The qualification of prophets as either ''major'' or ''minor'' refers to the length of their compositions and not to the relative importance of their office.

Byzantine-Slav Christians pay special honor to the Prophets by having their icons (holy pictures) displayed on the iconostasion, the icon-screen separating the sanctuary from the rest of the church. Prophetical writings and other parts of the Old Testament feature prominently in Byzantine liturgical services, such as Solemn Matins, All-night Vigils, etc.

About A.D. 100, the Jewish rabbis held a synod at Jamnia (about a dozen miles from the modern port of Tel Aviv-Jaffa)

and redefined the canon of the Old Testament. That is, they removed certain books from the list as apocryphal, not-authentic Scriptures. They dropped whatever did not conform to the Pentateuch, was not written in Hebrew or Palestinian, or was later than Esdra (c. 400 B.C.).

The New Testament

"At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son . . ." (Heb 1:1-2). Jesus, Son of God in human form, revealed so many things about the Godhead that the world has been greatly changed by them.

Jesus left us no written record of his teachings, but his early disciples did. We may divide the New Testament into the following groups of Books: a) The four Gospels, b) The Acts of the Apostles, c) The Epistles or Letters, and d) Revelation.

(a) The *Gospels,* written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, record the teachings of Jesus and many things about his life on earth. They emphasize his great deeds and miracles: curing the sick, the blind, the paralytics, the lame and the deaf. Yet, they do not neglect moving human traits such as his weeping over the death of his friend Lazarus, his enjoyment of sincere hospitality, his fatigue after a hard day, etc. Lovingly, they depict his sufferings, death and burial. Gloriously, they report his rising from the dead, his return to heaven and his sending of the Holy Spirit to comfort, guide and protect his Church for all time. The Gospels recount everything needed to show that, indeed, Jesus Christ is both God and man.

The Byzantine Church regards the Gospel Book as the symbol of Christ himself and gives it exceptional honor. The humblest parish adorns it with gold or silver, even jewels. Preceded by candlebearers, the priest or deacon carries it in solemn procession at every Eucharistic Liturgy, at every Solemn Matins, and around the church on the feast of the parish patron. All Byzantine churches keep it on the front center of the altar (which in turn symbolizes Christ's throne in heaven), the very place where Christ's sacred body and precious blood repose at the Divine

Sacrifice. During the Gospel reading itself, candlebearers stand at each side of the lectern as an honor guard; many of the faithful also hold lighted candles. This gives an air of joy to hearing the Good News, besides honoring the word of God.

(b) The *Acts of the Apostles,* probably written by Luke, tell what the apostles did after Christ ascended into heaven. It is a history of the early Church.

(c) The *Epistles* or *Letters* are just that: letters from the apostles to their converts. They deal with the growth of the early Church, the duties of Christ's followers, reprimands to the remiss and encouragement for the faithful.

Like all Christian Churches, the Byzantine has preserved the custom of reading excerpts from the *Acts* or from the *Epistles* in its liturgical services. This practice dates back to apostolic times. The passages for each day or each occasion are arranged in a book called the *Apostolos.*

(d) The *Book of Revelation* or *Apocalypse* of St. John foretells the struggles that Christ's Church will undergo and its final triumph.

"There were many other things that Jesus did; if all were written down, the world itself, I suppose, would not hold all the books that would have to be written" (Jn 21:25). Indeed, there were other fine Christian writings in the early Church. In fact, some of these were regarded as authentic Scriptures by many. In A.D. 382, Pope Damasus I officially defined the content of the Bible with book-lists of "what the universal Catholic Church accepts and what it must avoid." He rejected all books now commonly known as the New Testament Apocrypha.

At the Council of Ferrara-Florence (A.D. 1438-1439), the Catholic and Orthodox Churches agreed on the same listing. The Council of Trent in the sixteenth century repeated it. This achieved unity with Protestant Christians in the New Testament but not in the Old. The Protestants preferred to accept the Old Testament content which had been somewhat abbreviated by the Jewish rabbis at the Jamnia synod. This explains the main difference between the Catholic and Protestant Bibles.*

*The Protestant Bible omits the following Books: Tobias, Judith Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, the two Books of Machabees, and various sections of other books.

Scriptures Sometimes Hard to Understand

Very few people are expected to learn Hebrew or Greek so that they can read and understand exactly what the original passages of the Scriptures mean. This is left to the scholars. The rest of us have neither the time nor the ability. Even if we did, we could never be sure of some passages. St. Peter was right when he claimed some biblical passages *"are hard to understand; these are the points that uneducated and unbalanced people distort, in the same way as they distort the rest of scripture — a fatal thing for them to do" (2 P 3:16).*

The Constitution of the United States covers about a dozen pages. It is written in clear, understandable language — yet many people interpret it differently. Not all of them can be right. Every year, hundreds of lawyers argue about some of its passages. Hundreds of courts do too. Yearly, dozens of cases are appealed to the Supreme Court. Though the distinguished jurists of the Supreme Court may not be unanimous either, their decisions are the official interpretation of the Constitution.

We can expect no greater agreement over certain passages of the Bible, written in strange languages (Hebrew and Greek) thousands of years ago. Even scholars who have spent a lifetime in biblical studies disagree about some passages. Many people interpret the Bible differently. Not all of them can be right. The Commandment, for example, *Thou shalt not kill* seems simple enough to understand — until we learn that the original meaning comes closer to *Thou shalt not murder.* Is killing in a just war murder? Yes? No? Both answers cannot be right. Is capital punishment, even after due process of law, murder? Yes? No? Again, both answers cannot be right. Who is to say what answer is correct?

To decide disputed passages, fortunately, we have a kind of Supreme Court in the teaching authority of the Church. Individual theologians may speculate and argue, but when serious differences of opinion arise, the Church can solve them by solemn pronouncement (as it has done in defining which writings were to be included in the Bible). The Church has the right to do this, for Christ entrusted his revelation together

with its interpretation to the apostles and their successors. Christ certainly would not have neglected his Church by allowing those successors to lead the faithful into error. We have Christ's word for it. He will guide his Church till the end of time: *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations . . . and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time" (Mt 28:18-20).*

The Greeks Handed on God's Word to the Slavs

What the Greeks had, they passed on to the Slavs when they Christianized them. If ever a legacy was rich, it was theirs. The early Christians literally saturated their prayer life, their liturgy, with the Scriptures. Liturgy and Bible were so intertwined that it is sometimes difficult to know where one leaves off and the other begins, so that in a very real sense, we may say that the Bible was their liturgy and their liturgy was the Bible. Ss. Cyril and Methodius, together with their contemporaries, translated both Liturgy and Bible into Slavonic in the second half of the ninth century.

From then on, the Slav people, literate or not, knew the Bible through the remarkable use of the Scriptures in their parish churches — not only the New Testament, but also vast sections of the Old, especially the Law (Pentateuch) and the Prophets. Learning the Scriptures was easy, even for illiterate peasants, because they heard them so often in the prayers and readings of the Eucharistic Liturgy, solemn Vespers and Matins on Sundays and holy days (and there were thirty-six of these yearly). These divine services were known and loved by lay people no less than by monks as is evident today in the case of older immigrants who without any special training or ability can sing almost all of these services from memory!

It is as it should be. God's word still lives on in readings, prayer and song to be cherished and loved by his people unto generation after generation.

Sacred Tradition

After Jesus went to heaven, the apostles *"going out, preached everywhere" (Mk 16:20).* The emphasis is on preaching, spreading the Lord's teachings by word of mouth. In fact, some apostles wrote little or nothing at all. Even those impelled by the Holy Spirit wrote down many instructions, but not all of the truths taught by Jesus, as indicated by the quotation from St. John given above *(Jn 21:55).* Later, St. Paul admonished the Thessalonians: *"Stand firm, then, brothers, and keep the traditions that we taught you, whether by word of mouth or by letter" (2 Th 2:15).* All this shows that many revealed truths are not in the Scriptures but were handed down by the apostles under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and so have come to us. That, in a word, is *Sacred Tradition.*

Both the Bible and Tradition are instruments of God's revelation; both are divinely inspired; both are worthy of veneration. As St. John Chrysostom put it in the fourth century, "It is evident that the apostles did not communicate everything in writing, but they imparted many unwritten things; so both deserve equal faith... It is Tradition, ask no more" *(Hom. 4, in Th).*

If we maintain that the Bible, without Tradition, is the sole source of our faith, we are discarding many revealed truths. How would we know, for example, that all the books of the New Testament are divinely inspired? After all, there is nothing in the Bible that tells us which of its books, if any, are inspired by God.

Furthermore, why do we not recognize the other very early Christian writings as part of the Bible, beautiful works such as Clement's *Epistle to the Corinthians,* Polycarp's *Epistle to the Phillippians,* Ignatius' *Epistle to the Ephesians* (or his *Epistles to the Romans, to the Philadelphians, to the Smyrnaeans),* or the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*? Why? Because Tradition did not recognize them as part of the New Testament. True, these and other writings contain many Christian doctrines but their whole content is not the

inspired word of God.

We might claim that the apostles' inspiration can be inferred from their reception of the fullness of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, anything they wrote is divinely inspired, part of the Bible. But this does not explain the inspiration of Mark and Luke's writings, because they were not apostles but only disciples.

We can also claim that Luke and Mark received the fullness of the Holy Spirit through baptism and confirmation. But, then, so did Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius and the rest of the early Christian writers. No, Sacred Tradition alone tells us that Mark and Luke were divinely inspired and not the rest.

Moreover, Tradition makes other truths of faith much clearer than do the Scriptures alone, for instance the necessity of infant baptism, the number of sacraments, etc. Certainly, if the Scriptures alone were perfectly clear regarding the main truths of salvation, everyone would agree about them. The muliplication of non-Catholic denominations is proof enough that, without Tradition as a guide, there is disagreement on basic truths.

Truths of faith, other than those found in the New Testament, were also written down eventually. Today we find them in:

(a) The various professions of faith, such as the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds. These are carefully formulated summaries of basic Christian beliefs.

(b) The Church's liturgical books, which contain the directives (rubrics) and prayers of the Eucharistic Liturgy, the seven Sacraments, blessings for various occasions, funeral services, etc. Some of these are very ancient and show what the early Church believed and how it worshiped.

(c) The writings of the early Fathers and writers. The Church gave the title *Fathers* to the early Christian scholars, holy men who faithfully reflected revealed truth. Their holiness of life reinforced their integrity in setting down true doctrine. Those who did not meet these standards are known merely as Christian writers.

(d) Historical works. Here we include all Christian

histories, especially those contrasting heresies with the genuine teachings of the Church. The *Acts* of various martyrs and ancient inscriptions also provide good history. The former describe those truths for which martyrs gave up their lives; the latter, on tombs or public monuments, show what the early Christians believed regarding images, prayers for the dead, the afterlife, etc.

(e) The pronouncements of the Church's Councils, both general and provincial. These give us a clear idea of what the Church officially believes concerning specific subjects, and usually in great detail. A good example is Vatican II.

Tradition is Living, Not Dead

The world changes. So does its knowledge and use of words. As secular sciences advance, they can give us marvelous new insights into revealed truths which the ancients did not have. But modern research and development must also present us with new problems, new questions that must be solved. To mention a few, organ transplants, cloning, artificial insemination, corporate cheating, and atomic weapons are completely new realities. The Church must face such problems and give answers agreeing with God's truth. It must give old doctrines a facelift, in words and concepts modern man can understand and appreciate.

Part of revealed Tradition, stemming from the apostles, is just that: growing, progressing and developing God's truths to fit them into the contemporary scene. Indeed, the Church is equipped to do this job through the indwelling Spirit of truth, who animates it and every member of Christ's Mystical Body. The same Holy Spirit guarantees this sure gift of truth from error when the Church speaks officially.

Writings which propose insights which contradict or basically change accepted doctrine are not part of Tradition. The Church, through its ordinary teaching authority, can declare such writings heretical, in error. It has done so many times.

There is a bedrock of doctrinal truths which is unchangeable. Contemporary language is free to define or describe

religious truths in various ways; contemporary sciences are free to add new dimensions to those truths — as long as their basic meaning is not changed. Christ, for example, is both God and man; this the Church taught from the beginning. If an author writes that Jesus never claimed to be divine, could not work miracles, could not have risen from the dead, such a writer changes so many attributes of this man from Galilee that Christ's divinity would be denied despite the author's protest to the contrary. The Church does not have to call a general Council to pronounce the writer's ideas erroneous; it can do so through its ordinary teaching authority (magisterium).

Summaries of the Faith

Before accepting a person for baptism, the Church asks what that person believes. The candidate, either personally or through his or her sponsors, answers by making a profession of the faith. The practice seems to stem from apostolic times, for St. Paul wrote to the Romans: *"Thank God you submitted without reservation to the creed you were taught" (Rm 6:17).*

At first, baptismal creeds probably were quite simple. The Apostles' Creed is a good example. As time went on, they became more exact, more technical to counteract the heresies which had arisen. This explains the semi-technical language of the one drawn up at the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) and afterward expanded by the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381). Though the historic Christian creeds are not complete and final statements of the faith (nor were they intended to be), they are good summaries of its main truths. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is no exception; this is the Creed professed at Byzantine baptisms.

CHAPTER II

The Infinite God

"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God!" (Ps 14:1) Many reasons underlie modern unbelief. Jesus himself outlined the main ones, still valid today, in his parable of the sower *(Lk 8:5-15)*. Probably very few people today have not heard of God and his Good News through radio, television, newspapers and books.

Their reaction? Some heard it and *"then the devil comes and carries away the word from their hearts."* The forces of evil at work in the modern world take on many forms (none of them in the recognizable, traditional shape of a being with tail, pitchfork, and cloven hoofs). They use subtle means; they hide under high-sounding names like rationalism, agnosticism, relativism, humanism, Marxism, Maoism, and all kinds of other "isms." The spirit of philosophical prejudice is not easily unmasked. But some false ideas stand out: that absolute truth is impossible; that only material things exist, things that science can explore, weigh, and measure.

Sometimes evil itself is so horrendous, so overwhelming and unopposed in the world that it leads people to deny the reality of a good God. "God cannot exist; he would not allow such dreadful things to happen," they will say. Others again think man's own collective genius can scientifically control the environment and economics to the extent that man need not look to any deity to achieve the happiness he desires.

Some people hear about God and his word but *"these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of trial they give up."* The trials may be pressures of governments committed to atheism, making religious practice difficult or impossible. They may be government policies insisting on absolute state supremacy (people must exist for the state rather than the state for the people). Economic and cultural pressures shaped by men of greed and lust can also lead people away from God. In a word, trials may be anything which makes it hard to live as a believer.

Perhaps many more lost to God are those falling into thorns:

"This is people who have heard, but as they go on their way they are choked by the worries and riches and pleasures of life and do not reach maturity." The reasons here are so clear they need no comment.

Guilt for disbelief is difficult to measure, but it is inexcusable *(cf. Rm 1:18-21). Human reason should be able to figure out that God exists. The fact of creation is there for all to see.*

Reason Can Tell Us

It makes as much sense to deny the intelligence and power required for making the world and all things in it as for making a skyscraper, a computer or a jet. *"Every house is built by someone, of course,"* says St. Paul, *"but God built everything that exists" (Heb 3:4).*

Only Super-Intelligence could perfect the organic systems evident in all living things down to the tiniest insect. They come in all shapes and sizes, in all colors and hues, in all kinds and qualities — billions of a kind (in each species), yet no two the same. Each blade of grass, each fish, each bird, each animal a work of art, superbly designed with intricate patterns and functions, each programmed with computer accuracy in a law called heredity, the complex mechanisms of each organ no less wonderful than their whole.

Surely, Someone superintelligent must have established what we loosely call evolution and its inexorable laws, just as Someone must have set up the earth's eco-systems with their complicated checks and balances. The mathematical harmony of the universe, of our solar system alone, should be proof enough of design and supreme intelligence.

But why go on? As the book of Wisdom observes: *"Yes, naturally stupid are all men who have not known God and who, from the good things that are seen, have not been able to discover Him-who-is, or, by studying the works, have failed to recognize the Craftsman . . . And if they have been impressed by their power and energy, let them deduce from these how much mightier is he that formed them, since through the grandeur and beauty of the creatures we may, by analogy, contemplate*

their Author'' (Ws 13:1, 4-5).

When one sits down to think of it, how *can* one deny that there is a God? Unbelievers cannot be blameless: *''They are not to be excused: if they are capable of acquiring enough knowledge to be able to investigate the world, how have they been so slow to find its Master?'' (Ws 13:1, 8-9).*

Conscience

In spite of all such natural evidence, perhaps the last two centuries have produced more atheists than any other age. All peoples, civilized nations or stone-age tribes, have acknowledged some kind of deity. In recorded history and before it, ritual objects, altars and temples bear witness to this fact.

Before Christ came to earth, Cicero wrote, ''There is no people so rude and wild as not to have a belief in a god, though they may not understand his nature.'' Livingstone, who got to know primitive African tribes better than any man of his generation, observed, ''Degraded as they may be, it is not necessary to speak to them of the existence of God, nor of the future life. Those two truths are universally acknowledged in Africa.''

Such a universal conviction can only come from the inner depths of human beings, from something inseparable from their reasoning nature. With St. Paul, we can call it *''the law engraved on their hearts . . . their conscience'' (Rm 2:15).* Primitive men were mistaken in identifying the divine with idols, animals, sun, moon and stars, but learned men and sages succeeded in reasoning their way to the conclusion that there can be only one Supreme Being.

God Also Told Us About Himself

Some things about God we can know through our reason and his created works. We can know other truths about him only because he told us, through his revelation. Believing him and his word requires faith. This is a free gift of God *(Ep 2:8),* but our free will can either cooperate with God's grace or reject it. If we do cooperate we will believe whatever he told us.

God told us much more about himself than that he was the

Creator, but because of the limitations of our intelligence within the framework of time and space, many of his attributes are hard for us to understand, and since he is infinite, no man or woman will ever understand him completely.

One Infinite Being

When asked his name by Moses, God answered I AM WHO AM, and then added, *''This is what you must say to the sons of Israel: 'I Am has sent me to you''' (Ex 3:14).* Here God calls himself Being without limit, *the* Being therefore different from any other being. All others *possess* limited being: he *is* unlimited being, the fulness of being, the sum of all perfection. This very notion excludes another One of his kind.

The limitations found in created finite beings do not exist in God. Created beings always receive existence from other beings. This dependence is itself an imperfection. God exists even if nothing else did; he is independent of every other being, and so there is in him no limitation.

Eternal And Changeless

God is eternal, without beginning and without end. The Scriptures usually contrast God's eternity with created finite things: *''Before the mountains were born, before the earth or the world came to birth, you were God from all eternity and for ever'' (Ps 90:2).* Revelation calls God, *''who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty'' (Rv 1:8).*

The very idea of limited beings implies that their perfections are curtailed (that they *possess* wisdom, power, goodness, beauty, etc., only to a certain degree) and that these can be increased beyond that particular degree (that they can indeed become wiser, more powerful, etc.). In other words, they can change; they are changeable. God is not changeable because he *is* infinite (unlimited) being, perfection. In that sense, he cannot be other than he is.

Everything but God changes. Empires and nations arise and die, but God remains unchanged and unchangeable. He said, *''No, I, Yahweh, do not change'' (Ml 3:6).* Mountains and

valleys appear and disappear, but God does not: *"Aeons ago, you laid earth's foundations, the heavens are the work of your hands; all will vanish, though you remain, all wear out like a garment, like clothes that need changing you will change them; but yourself, you never change, and your years are unending" (Ps 102:25-27).* To express the same idea, our liturgical prayers usually end with, "now and always, and for ever and ever."

We humans form our ideas, our thinking about the divine, from limited, finite things. Our ideas of the divine are therefore imperfect. So are the words we use about God.

Knowing God only imperfectly and applying our way of thinking to him, we say that God *possesses* wisdom, goodness and so on. If he really possessed these as something added to his nature, his being-essence would be imperfect of itself and would be perfected by them. This is incorrect, God *is* absolutely perfect, completely incapable of further perfection. Only limited beings, like man, *possess* wisdom, goodness, etc., as something added to their being, not God. Since God's being (essence) is identical with his perfections, a better way of speaking is that God *is* wisdom, goodness, etc., as Jesus himself indicated when he said, *"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14:6).* So did St. John, *"God is love" (1 Jn 4:16).* This is why he could also add, *"and anyone who lives in love lives in God, and God lives in him" (1 Jn 4:16).*

God, of course, knowing that we are limited in our ways of thinking, spoke to us according to our own ideas and words. We must understand this when we read the Scriptures that extol his greatness, his might; or any other of his attributes. We must understand this, too, when the Bible speaks of God's hand, his eyes and ears, though as a spirit he needs no eyes to see, ears to hear, nor hands to do anything. To give us the idea that God is all-knowing, for example, the Scripture speaks of God's eyes and ears as seeing and hearing all things: *"Samuel listened to all that the people had to say and repeated it in the ears of Yahweh" (1 S 8:21); "Yahweh your God takes care of this land, the eyes of Yahweh your God are on it always . . . ." (Dt 11:12).* To impress us with his might, scripture uses the idea of God's hand: *"The hand of Yahweh fell upon them in the camp until*

they had perished entirely'' (Dt 2:15). To indicate his revelation, the mouth of God is mentioned: *''Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'' (Mt 4:4; Dt 8:3).* This imagery is merely a human and imperfect way of expressing some truth about God.

God the Almighty, the All-Powerful

In God all is infinite, like his being. He is almighty, limitless power. He can do all things. In the words of Jesus, *''For God everything is possible'' (Mt 19:26).* Centuries before, the author of Wisdom expressed it in this way: *''For your great strength is always at your call; who can withstand the might of your arm? In your sight the whole world is like a grain of dust that tips the scales, like a drop of morning dew falling on the ground. You are merciful to all, because you can do all things'' (Ws 11:21-23).*

God is present everywhere by keeping everything in existence with this limitless power. Our very existence depends upon him: *''How, had you (O God) not willed it, could a thing persist, how be conserved if not called forth by you?'' (Ws 11:25)*

All-Knowing, All-Wise God

God sees all things and knows all things just as they are because he is everywhere with his infinite Being. We humans must often be satisfied with mere guesses, for we generally know only the outward appearances of things. But God's knowledge, like his Being, penetrates all things (but is totally distinct from them). Besides, he made everything, so why should he not know it exactly? *''No created thing can hide from him; everything is uncovered and open to his eyes'' (Heb 4:13).*

His knowledge extends to great things: *''He decides the number of the stars and gives each of them a name; our Lord is great, all-powerful, of infinite understanding'' (Ps 147:4-5).* It extends to little things: *''Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing. Why, every hair on your head has been counted'' (Mt 10:29-30).*

Being eternal, God knows the past, present and future, even

what proceeds from our free will. We can read many instances of the latter in the prophecies of the Old Testament, especially concerning the Messiah. All was predicted, all was fulfilled in Christ Jesus, even the actions resulting from the free will of others. Jesus himself showed he had this power as Son of God, *''For Jesus knew from the outset those who did not believe, and who it was that would betray him'' (Jn 6:64).*

A few days earlier, Jesus had wept over Jerusalem and predicted its destruction: *''As he drew near and came in sight of the city he shed tears over it and said, 'If you in your turn had only understood on this day the message of peace! But, alas, it is hidden from your eyes! Yes, a time is coming when your enemies will raise fortifications all round you, when they will encircle you and hem you in on every side; they will dash you and the children inside your walls to the ground; they will leave not one stone standing on another within you — and all because you did not recognize your opportunity when God offered it''' (Lk 19:41-44).* The Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

CHAPTER III

God Is Spirit

When asked by the Samaritan woman whether God ought to be worshipped on Mount Gerizim or at Jerusalem, Jesus replied, *"True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth . . . God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:23-24).*

The meaning of spiritual realities is always difficult to grasp, especially for modern minds. Trained to deal with reality that can be measured, weighed and observed, we find it particularly difficult to understand how a being can be real, yet not have shape, weight or form; how it can be real, yet not occupy space, place and time. We are used to equating the real with the material.

Material things are confined, limited to place, space and time. This car, for example, being material, has to occupy a definite place and space — so much floor and space footage. It exists now, this year, in this century, and only for so many years. Shape, size and color are other limitations of matter — this car is streamlined, hatch-backed, sub-compact and blue. Material things, being made up of parts, also can be divided, taken apart, destroyed.

A spirit is not limited to any of these ways because it is absolutely immaterial, has no matter at all. It exists, therefore, without having to occupy space or place, without any size, shape, or weight. That is why it is foolish and useless trying to figure out a way to prove or disprove a spirit's existence by observation (by trying to see, measure, weigh, etc.). The Soviet press release about the fact of the astronauts not seeing God in space as constituting proof of his non-existence merely reflects their total misconception of elementary spiritual realities.

Furthermore, because a spirit is not made up of parts, it cannot be divided nor destroyed (destruction is the radical breakup of parts, etc.). If a being cannot be destroyed, it is immortal. All this applies to a spirit, human soul, angel or God.

Present Everywhere

Having limited being, our soul has a limited presence in the sense that it cannot be everywhere. God is everywhere because he is unlimited Being. As a spirit, our soul has no parts like material things, so it is totally and indivisibly present in every part of our living body, but it does not extend beyond the limits of our body. God's presence is not limited by anything: it is even beyond the boundaries of the universe. Solomon realized this when he spoke at the dedication of the temple, *"Why, the heavens and their own heavens cannot contain you! How much less this house that I have built" (2 Ch 6:18).*

Thinking about this, too, the psalmist was moved to say: *"Where could I go to escape your spirit? Where could I flee from your presence? If I climb the heavens, you are there, there too, if I lie in Sheol. If I flew to the point of sunrise, or westward across the sea, your hand would still be guiding me, your right hand holding me" (Ps 139:7-10).*

Many people still think of God as Somebody way out there, far out in some nebulous distance. He is Somebody out there, true, but he is also here: he is everywhere. St. Luke put it this way: *"Yet in fact he is not far from any of us, since it is in him that we live, and move, and exist" (Ac 17:28).*

Through Jeremiah, God said, *"Do I not fill heaven and earth — it is Yahweh who speaks" (Jr 23:24).* God fills heaven and earth by being present in every part of the universe with his substance as water is in a pail. Actually, all the water in a pail is not wholly present in each part, only part in part. God, being Spirit, not consisting of parts, is present in everything, in each part of everything, everywhere, with his whole substance. Yet he is utterly distinct from us, from the world and everything: we are not God, the world is not God, nor is anything else God!

God's Special Presence

When two or three are gathered together in his name, God is present in a special mysterious way. The Jews of old called it the *Shekinah*.

When first revealed, this special divine presence showed itself

to Ezekiel *(3:12)* in visible form as the glory of God *(''Blessed be the glory of Yahweh in his dwelling place'')*. For the Jews, the tabernacle and later the Temple became places where this divine presence was localized. Later, the Jews rightly became convinced that anywhere two or three gathered together to read the Scriptures, there in their midst was this special presence of God.

Christ, as Son of God, revealed that this was true of himself too: *''I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them'' (Mt 18:19-20)*. This means what it says, anywhere, at home, in school or driving down the street.

Byzantine Christians are vividly aware of this mysterious divine presence and regard their churches as dwelling-places of God. In the Eucharist, Jesus is miraculously present with his body and blood, soul and divinity. They know this, but even when the Holy sacrament is not there, the church still remains ''heaven on earth'' for them, especially the sanctuary. As a result, the Byzantine Church calls the sanctuary the *Holy Place* or the *Holy of Holies,* reminiscent of the Jerusalem Temple. Its awesome holiness is emphasized by the iconostas(ion) which separates it from the nave (see below, pp. 75ff.).

The idea of keeping the most holy apart comes from the mystery of the Burning Bush, when God warned Moses not to come any closer: *''Come no nearer. Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground'' (Ex 3:5)*. The idea of ''hiding'' the most sacred, on the other hand, goes back to fourth-century Eastern spirituality when the notion of the holy and awesome was being associated with ''the dangerous,'' ''the terrifying.'' To induce greater reverence for the divine presence and the sacred mysteries, for example, St. Cyril of Jerusalem described them as ''fearful,'' ''the most dread,'' ''the most hair-raising.'' This notion has a scriptural basis: *''Yahweh said to Moses, 'Go down and warn the people not to pass beyond their bounds to come and look on Yahweh, or many of them will lose their lives'' (Ex 19:21)*.

Jerusalem probably led the way in introducing a veil to hide and separate the holy mysteries from the faithful. From veiling

off the sanctuary to partitioning it off was but a step. From the seventh century on, solid or screen partitions, waist-high or ceiling-high, became typical features of Byzantine churches. Later, icons were hung on these partitions, probably to further the impression of "heaven on earth." In heaven, God in his glory is surrounded by saints; so in the sanctuary he is surrounded by images of his holy ones.

He Is a Living God

Abstract considerations may give us the idea that a spirit is some formless, inert reality. Not at all! A spirit is a person and acts like one, for it has intelligence and free will. We have these faculties because of our spirit, the soul. Animals and plants, though living, do not have them because their principle of life is different from ours: it is not spiritual. They cannot think, cannot really choose freely: they act by instinct.

We have said it before: the universe, the earth and all its creatures all programmed according to a definite plan and design, required supreme intelligence. God did it all, so he must be supremely intelligent. He did not have to, but he chose to do it, as he chose the Israelites to be his special people, and as he chose to send his only-begotten Son to redeem us. These are acts of a rational and free being. Having intelligence with which to think and a will with which to choose, God is personal in that very basic sense. Obviously, there is more to personality than just being intelligent and free. God is more than that too.

Personal and Loving

God is not some infinite Being, totally uncaring and uninterested in the fate of his creatures. Nor is he some impersonal cosmic force. His dealings with the Israelites show that he does care very much, that he is a personal God. This is what he meant by telling Moses he was *"Yahweh, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex 3:15)* and, *"Yahweh your God is going with you; he will not fail you or desert you" (Dt 31:6)*. He kept his word. He brought his people out of slavery, made a pact (covenant) with them, gave them a code of

life, sent them quail and manna in the desert, and brought them to the promised land. He helped them overcome enemies of body and soul. No wonder Joshua exclaimed, *''By this you shall know that a living God is with you'' (Jos 3:10),* and Isaiah, *''Thus says Yahweh, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I, Yahweh, your God, teach you what is good for you, I lead you in the way that you must go'' (Is 48:17).*

The psalms, all of them, are exquisite poems on the personal relationship between God and man.

Divine Providence means God's watchful care for his creatures, a care prompted by concern, tenderness and love for each of us. It means both foresight and nourishment. Jesus wanted us to think of God not so much as the Almighty but as a Father who loves his children. Moved by the Spirit, we should all cry out *''Abba, Father'' (Mk 14:36; Rm 8:15; Ga 4:6),* an Aramaic word of intimate familiarity, comparable with ''Papa'' or ''Dad.'' It gripped the first Christians so much that when they translated the text into other languages, they left the word in its original, so that readers would not lose any of its flavor.

We can almost hear him now: Jesus trying to convince people that God cares — with an infinite love. His touching, simple words still move us and we are hushed:

''That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it. Surely life means more than food, and the body more than clothing! Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are? Can any of you, for all his worrying, add one single cubit to his span of life? And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin; yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of these. Now if that is how God clothes the grass in the field which is there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more look after you, you men of little faith? So do not worry; do not say, 'What are we to eat? What are we to drink? How are we to be clothed?' It is the pagans who set their hearts

on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well'' (Mt 6:25-33).

God Reflected in Us

We could use all the words in the world yet not begin to describe God. He is holy, loving good and hating evil. He is just, rewarding good and punishing evil according to merit. He is kind, generous, compassionate, merciful, patient, truthful, trustworthy: in fact, any other perfection we can think of — to an infinite degree. His being is such (limitless) that he *is* all those perfections personified: he *is* goodness, kindness, mercy, etc.

Our perfections are reflections of him. That is why our hearts are instinctively drawn to the really good people on earth, to the compassionate, the humble, generous and so on, because they reflect God. That is how he will recognize us when it comes to judgment. How else explain the Lord's words, *''I shall tell them to their faces: I have never known you; away from me, you evil men'' (Mt 7:23).*

All people reflect God in their perfections, being *''images of his Son'' (Rm 8:29), ''reflecting like mirrors the brightness of the Lord, all grown brighter and brighter as we are turned into the image that we reflect'' (2 Co 3:18).* The Holy Mother of God and the saints mirror him even more. Jesus mirrors him perfectly insofar as human nature is able to.

God Reflected in Icons

We are creatures of body and soul. In everything we do, worship included, we use both mind and senses. Jesus recognized this when he used clay made of spittle and soil, together with water of the Siloam Pool, in curing the blind man *(Jn 9:6).* He let himself be baptized with water from the Jordan. He used the physical act of breathing when he gave the apostles power to forgive sins *(Jn 20:22).* He did not have to use such externals: he used them in order to express more vividly to us the hidden reality being imparted. In fact, he made use of externals, physical

means, which we now call sensible signs, for the imparting of all the sacramental mysteries.

Almost from the beginning, the Church was realistic. It used pictures to help us pray, to serve as reminders of holy events and people. But between the Christian East and West there is a world of difference in the interpretation given to sacred images.

In Greek *icon* means an image, a likeness, a resemblance, a picture (from the verb *eoikenai,* to look like). Paul uses that very word in the passage about people becoming images of the Lord. In English, icon means a special kind of picture, a painting of the Lord, of holy persons or of great events in their lives. The painting is usually, though by no means always, done on a panel of wood covered with a thin layer of gesso (plaster and powdered alabaster).

Western Christians regard holy pictures merely as representations of those in heaven. For Eastern Christians, the picture and the person it represents, whether the Lord, his Mother or the saints, are so closely linked that in contemplating the picture the person in it is in some way present — in that it indeed reflects that person's holiness, compassion, goodness and mercy. The simple Russian, Ukrainian or Greek peasant cannot explain it, but he has an intuitive belief that the pictured holy one is present in some mysterious way. It is not easy for him to sin, to lie, to cheat, to be brutal before an icon in his home. As the Russians used to say, ''Before committing a foul deed, carry out the saints,'' meaning the holy icons. When the Soviets began displaying ancient icons in museums and art galleries as part of the Russian heritage, people flocked to see them: ''The saints'' had been brought back. Even today in Soviet museums, some visitors take off their caps before the holy images.

The intense feeling of reverence for icons may be explained partially by the original intention of the icon painters. They attempted to put into the icon a sensible emanation of the divine. They prayed and fasted for days and weeks before taking up their brushes.

Eastern spirituality identified holiness with asceticism: great saints were fiercely ascetic. Christ and the holy ones pictured on

icons, therefore, look thin, emaciated, worn out as if by incessant praying. The holy ones were anything but sensual; their representations are totally devoid of any physical or emotional appeal.

Russian and Ukrainian icon painters observed the iron discipline and strict rules prescribed by the Greek masters. Background, clothes, faces, hands and feet had to conform to definite rules of shape, line and color; so did landscapes, skies, trees, even animals. Nothing could be abandoned to artistic fancy. The Slavs followed the rules with all humility, but their soul was different: it could not repress its deep emotion, tenderness and sacred joy. The holy ones look gentler and more mellow in Slav icons than in the Greek.

Before the Communist takeover, icons were important items in every Slav Christian home. The eastern corner of every room was reserved for one or more icons — sometimes encased in a small shrine lined with silk or velvet, in front of which a small lamp burned day and night. In the houses of the rich and he huts of the poor, the icon-corner was decorated in the nicest way possible: it was called the *Red Corner*. In old Slavonic, the liturgical language for centuries, "red" was synonymous with "beautiful," with something out of the ordinary, festive or exceptionally important. Red Square in Moscow, for example, is not a Communist expression, as many seem to believe, but the very old name given to the most beautiful square of the tsar's former capital.

In the old days, whenever someone entered a house, his own or that of a friend, he would first bow low before the icons and make the sign of the cross before greeting those present. Sometimes he would also express his reverence for the icons with a kiss.

For Eastern Christians, icons at home or in church are always more than mere art. They are channels of grace (sacramentals) bringing people into contact with the realities of heaven. That is why Eastern Christians have such deep feelings for them; that is why they revere them with awe.

CHAPTER IV

The Mystery of God in the Trinity

Of all mysteries, the greatest is the Holy Trinity: three Persons in one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Had God not told us this truth, we could not have suspected it. The mystery of three Persons in God is not against reason, but any attempt to explain it completely is doomed to failure. As St. Ambrose remarked, "The voice is silent; not only mine, but the voice of angels." Utterly baffled by this mystery, we simply have to take God's word for it.

This truth concerns the intimate life of God, the mystery of God in himself. It is a mystery of impenetrable relationships and love. Our own relationships with other people are impenetrable, too, and we must fall back upon faith, human faith, to know the truth of the others' intimate lives and of their love for us or lack of it — even with people we know quite well and see frequently. The intimate life of God in himself, the mystery of the Trinity (the family secret, as it were), surely cannot be known by anyone who has never seen God, and *"No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is nearest to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (Jn 1:18).*

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is so great that God revealed it to man gradually, only by degrees. The shock would have been too much even for the chosen people. Surrounded as they were on all sides by peoples believing in many gods (polytheists), they would have hopelessly confused the Trinity with polytheism. Still, there are hints of the Trinity in the Old Testament.

The Trinity in the Old Testament

Only after Jesus revealed the existence of the Trinity clearly and explicitly can we now better understand the veiled references to it in the Old Testament.

There may be a hint of some plurality-in-one almost at the beginning of the Bible: *"God said, 'Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves . . . ' God created man in*

the image of himself' (Gn 1:26-27). Again, after Adam's sin, *'''See, the man has become like one of us, with his knowledge of good and evil''' (Gn 3:22).* To confound the descendants of Noah when they arrogantly planned to reach heaven by building a tower (Babel), God mused within himself, *'''Come, let us go down and confuse their language on the spot . . .' Yahweh scattered them thence over the whole face of the earth'' (Gn 11:7-8).*

Many of the early Fathers also saw hints of the Trinity in the frequent use of God's name in plural form *Elohim* (the singular is *El),* and in the triple repetitions both of the divine name and of his attributes (e.g., *Dt 6:4; Ps 67:7-8; Is 6:3).*

The Trinity in the New Testament

The Son of God was coming to earth! The Archangel Gabriel made the announcement. He told Mary at Nazareth, *''Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High'' (Lk 1:31-32).* In answer to her question about how this could be, Gabriel replied: *'''The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called the Son of God''' (Lk 1:35).* Here for the first time man got to know that, besides the Most High (Father), there is God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus grew up and left home to begin his teaching. Before beginning his public life, however, he insisted on being baptized by John. At the baptism, *''Suddenly the heavens opened,''* and John the Baptist *''saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. And a voice spoke from heaven, This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him'' (Mt 3:16f.).* Here again we have three persons: the Father speaking, the Son being baptized, and the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove.

Jesus himself began teaching this truth of the Trinity openly in the third year of his ministry. The Jews were in a fighting mood. The time was the feast of the Dedication in winter; the place, Solomon's porch in the Temple of Jerusalem. Despite

Jesus' claims that he was the one sent from God, the Jews disbelieved him, so he insists: *"I have told you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name are my witness. . . ."* As Son of God, he could also claim: *"I give them (his sheep, the ones who believe him) eternal life; they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from me. The Father who gave them to me is greater than anyone, and no one can steal from the Father. The Father and I are one" (Jn 10:25-30).*

The Jews understood exactly what he meant, for *"They fetched stones to stone him."* He minces no words as he continues: *"I have done many good works for you to see, works from my Father; for which of these are you stoning me?"* The Jews answer him: *"We are not stoning you for doing a good work but for blasphemy: you are only a man and you claim to be God" (Jn 10:32-33).* Here Jesus does not mention the Holy Spirit, but does claim to be the Son of God, someone distinct from the Father.

In his heart-to-heart talk with his friends the evening before he died, Jesus repeatedly referred to God as his Father and to the Holy Spirit as another Advocate. Sadly, almost pathetically, he insisted: *"You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (Jn 14:11). "I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you for ever, that spirit of truth . . . ."(Jn 14:16). "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you" (Jn 14:26). "When the Advocate comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father, he will be my witness" (Jn 15:26). "Now, Father,"* he prayed, *"it is time for you to glorify me with that glory I had with you before ever the world was" (Jn 17:5).*

The next day Jesus was put to death. The charge against him was still the same: blasphemy. The high priest asked him, *"Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"* Jesus answered unequivocally, *"I am" (Mk 14:61-62).* For that, the verdict was death. With his dying breath, he called out, *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23:46).*

After his resurrection, Jesus stayed on earth for forty days.

His last commission to the apostles contained a brief and clear confirmation of the Holy Trinity: *"Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations, baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19).*

Inspired as he was, St. Paul glorifies the Trinity by referring to the three Divine Persons in frequent invocations, as he does in his second letter to the Corinthians: *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Co 13:13).*

There are many more passages in the New Testament referring to the Holy Trinity (e.g., *1 P 1:2, Tt 3:4-6, Heb 10:29, Jude 20-21, etc.).*

Each Divine Person Is Distinct

There are three distinct Persons who are one God. They are really distinct; not only are they called by different names, they are also contrasted by different relationships. One begets, the other is begotten; one sends, the others are sent; the first asks the second sends the third at the request of the first. The third proceeds from the others and acts in his own unique way, teaching, being witness, etc. Furthermore, all three act as Persons because all these actions (the asking, the sending, the teaching) can be attributed only to persons. In other words, the Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit; the Son is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the son. Beyond this we cannot say much.

For all his speculation, St. Gregory of Nazianzus could only say "You hear that there is generation? Do not waste your time in seeking after the *how*. You hear that the Spirit proceeds from the Father? Do not busy yourself about the *how*" *(Orat.* XX, 2); "You ask what is the procession of the Holy Spirit? Do tell me first what is the unbegottenness of the Father, then I will explain to you the physiology of the Son's generation and the Spirit's procession and both of us shall be stricken with madness for prying into the mystery of God" *(Orat.* XXXI, 8).

Each Person Is God

Though each Person is distinct, each of them is one and the same God.

The Father is God. Jesus clearly taught this: *"I am ascending to my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God" (Jn 20:17); "Abba (Father), everything is possible for you . . . ." (Mk 14:36* — Almighty power is a divine attribute).

The Son is God. The Scriptures are no less explicit regarding the divinity of the Son: *"In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him" (Jn 1:1-3).* The Divine Word is *"the only Son of the Father" (Jn 1:14)* — if the Father is God, the Son must be too. (Besides this, Jesus himself proved he is God by rising from the dead as he predicted, a feat that requires divine power).

The Holy Spirt is God. The Scriptures call the Holy Spirit God: *"How can Satan have so possessed you that you should lie to the Holy Spirit? . . . .It is not to men that you have lied, but to God" (Ac 5:3,4).* Sometimes the Scriptures point to God and the Holy Spirit as the one giver of divine gifts: *"There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them" (1 Co 12:4ff.;* cf. also *Ga 4:6).* Only an infinite being can comprehend infinite being, yet the Scriptures say of the Holy Spirit: *"These are the very things that God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit reaches the depths of everything, even the depths of God. After all, the depths of a man can only be known by his own spirit, not by any other man, and in the same way the depths of God can only be known by the Spirit of God" (1 Co 2:10-11).*

Each of the three Persons is God with one and the same divine nature or substance, otherwise there would be three gods. People have separate human natures. Each human person *has* a nature similar to that of others yet truly distinct — they are not one being. Each divine Person *is* a nature not merely similar to that

of the others, but the same.

The Earliest Christians Believed in the Trinity

We can comb history from the time of Christ on and we will find that Christians believed in the Holy Trinity immediately from the beginning. They baptized in the name of the three divine Persons; they went to their death confessing the Trinity; they composed creeds which professed the same truth as did their writers — Clement of Rome, Justin, Polycarp, Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus, Athenagoras — and they branded as heretics all those who in some way or another denied the existence of the three Persons in God — Praxeas, Noetus, Sabellius, Photinus and Priscillian, Arius.

To oppose these heretics and their false teachings, the Church called one council after another, clarifying and defining certain aspects of the true doctrine in precise terms, too technical to be included here.

The Holy Trinity: Center of the Christian Faith

Belief in the Trinity is important, not only for shedding light on the inner life of God, but also because it helps us to understand other truths of the Christian faith. In fact, it is central to that faith. Without belief in the plurality of Persons in one God, who could believe that Jesus is the Son of God, come to earth to make man right with God?

How are we to understand this truth of the Trinity? Truly, we cannot. There are many three-in-one signs, apparent symbols of the Trinity: fire, with its flame, heat and light; the shamrock or three-leaf clover, dear to St. Patrick; three match-sticks held together producing a single flame, a delightful demonstration for children in catechism class. Faced with the truly awesome mystery of the Holy Trinity, all of us, doctors of theology or not, are truly children. It is as it should be; God would have made it clearer had it been necessary for our salvations.

The Sign of the Cross, an Expression of Belief in the Trinity

Two truths typify Christianity: the Holy Trinity and the

Redemption. The sign of the cross expresses both.

Christians used it from apostolic times by tracing it with thumb or forefinger on their foreheads. Probably as a reaction against Monophysism (the fifth-century heresy claiming that Jesus had only one nature, the divine), they began making the sign of the cross with a wider gesture, from brow to breast and from right shoulder to left. The thumb and first two fingers of the right hand are joined at the tips; the fourth and fifth fingers are folded over the palm. The two fingers and thumb signify the three Persons of the Trinity, while the other two fingers symbolize the two natures, the divine and human, in Jesus Christ (denied by the Monophysite heresy). With the fingers so joined, the forehead is touched first ("In the name of the Father"), then the breast ("and of the Son"), the right shoulder ("and of the Holy . . ."), and finally the left shoulder (". . . Spirit. Amen"). Meanwhile, the head and shoulders are slightly bowed as a sign of submission to the Godhead.

Byzantine Christians touch the right shoulder first, not the left as do Latin Rite Catholics. Before the end of the twelfth century, Christians of both East and West made the sign of the cross from the right to the left. At the time of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), Latin Rite Catholics began making it with all the fingers extended, and from the left shoulder to the right. This newer way was to stress the fact that Jesus came from the Father to earth by becoming man, then descended into the left side, i.e., into hell, by his death and thence into his Father's right side, by his ascension. Another explanation was that making the sign from the left (the weak side, the side of sin) to the right (the side of salvation) would symbolize the death of Christ on the cross, and our being carried by it from the left to the right side, to salvation.

The earlier, more ancient way of making the sign of the cross, still practiced by Byzantine Christians, from the right to the left, is understood to mean that salvation passed from the Jews, who were at the right side of God (the side of honor, belonging to the chosen people) to the Gentiles, who were at his left. Touching the right shoulder first also expresses the Christian hope to be put among the righteous on the right hand of Christ,

the Judge, at the Final Judgment.

The ritual sign of the cross, whatever its form, is indeed the sign of Christ crucified, the sign of our redemption, and its accompanying words express our belief in the Holy Trinity and glorify it. Usually, Byzantine Christians cross themselves three times, each separate action honoring one Person of the Trinity.

In addition, touching the forehead, breast, and shoulders acknowledges that our faculties (mind and heart) and all our strength (the shoulders) are being dedicated to the service of the Triune God through the cross of Christ.

Frequency

Byzantine Christians love to use the sign of the cross liberally in everyday life. During the Eucharistic Liturgy, the faithful make it at least thirty-six times — at every blessing and doxology, and whenever the three Persons of the Trinity are mentioned. Anyone wishing to place emphasis on a particular prayer or petition in any liturgical service will also cross himself.

The sign of the cross accompanies pious Eastern Slavs from cradle to grave, and beyond. They cross themselves when leaving on a trip, when going to work or returning from it, when beginning their work or ending it. They make a reverent sign of the cross on passing a church, on hearing of a death, accident or other bad news, on meeting a funeral procession. They make it in fear, danger, temptation, or as a sign of fervent entreaty; or again, on passing a roadside cross or an icon-shrine, before an icon in any home. They make it before and after meals. When a mother is putting her child to sleep, she traces the sign of the cross over it. The scriptural text, *"A father's blessing makes the houses of his children firm" (Si 3:11)* is lived daily in their actions and traditions. At weddings, the young couple's fathers and mothers bless their children at the doorstep before they leave for the church wedding. Any important event, even the most mundane, is sanctified with this truly Christian practice.

Without even knowing it, people who cross themselves are imitating the early Christians. As far back as the second century, Christians blessed their day with the sign of the cross. "We cross

ourselves,'' Tertullian writes, ''in all our travels and movements, whenever we enter or go out of the house, in putting on our shoes, at the bath, at the table, in lighting our candles, in lying down, in sitting down, in whatever we do . . . .'' (''De cor. mil.,'' 3). St. Cyril of Jerusalem says the same thing of the Christians in his day (the fourth century). ''We make it, this sign,'' he writes, ''over the bread we eat and over the cup we drink; whenever we come into or go out of the house; before our sleep, when we lie down and when we get up; when we are on a trip, and when we are resting'' (''Cat.'' XIII, 36).

We should do no less. Over and over again, we can dedicate and rededicate these ordinary acts of our day with this simple sign.

PART TWO

THE HOLY MYSTERY OF CREATED BEINGS

CHAPTER V

Creation

Man has always wondered about the origin of the world. Unbelievers still do. Was it always there? How did it come about? Why?

Primitive man gazed at the night skies, saw more stars than he could count, and scratched his head. He figured them to be slightly larger than the neighbor's campfire, and maybe farther than an eight-week hunting trip. No mere man could have hung so many of them in the sky. Perhaps they are gods and the sun is their chief. Searching the same heavens with his radio telescope, modern man is baffled by the number of galaxies. Calculating their distance in millions and even billions of light years, he knows he will never be able to reach them. Awe fills his soul, as he ponders the reaches of outer space. How could it all have come about, he wonders.

The ancient Greeks contemplated matter, imagined the smallest particle possible and gave it a name, atom. Modern scientists proved the atom existed, but found it a microcosm: a small world, consisting of a nucleus (protons and neutrons) and electrons swirling around it, not unlike our sun with its planetary system. These must be the smallest particles in existence, they theorized. That was a few decades ago. Now scientists have counted hundreds of other particles within the atom and they know this is not the end. The awe of the physicist equals that of the astronomer: both are left to marvel at the wonder of it all.

Looking into a stagnant pond, ancient man was surprised at the teeming life within it. Why, he mused, some living creatures are so tiny I cannot pick them up between my finger tips, and yet they are alive! His modern cousin peers through his electron microscope into a droplet of similar water and is astonished even more by what he sees. But the secret of life — the principle of life — ever-old and ever-new, eludes him just as it did his forebears millenniums ago. What is life? How did it come about?

This cat, this fly, this man vibrantly alive one moment, dead

the next! What happened? What exactly was it that made the difference? What *is* life? How can a dead carrot change into the living flesh of a man? The questions are unending. Scientific knowledge has indeed taken giant strides, but each step opens up new vistas, new worlds, which bring about new puzzles.

Some of the questions are fundamental; others are not. For the believer, the fundamental questions are answered by God's word. For the unbeliever, they remain unanswered. Faith answers more questions than does unbelief. The unbelieving scientist faced with a universe in which all things can be observed and measured, is yet unable to determine its cause. This conjures a realm of faith — precisely what science had tried to banish. "It's like a bad dream," remarked a materialistic physicist recently, "we climb the highest mountain in science, and we find the theologians have been sitting there for centuries."

God Created the World Out of Nothing

For the Christian, the puzzle of the world's origin is solved by the simple words of Genesis: *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was a formless void . . . . " (Gn 1:1-2).*

When we make a chair, a car, or anything, we make it out of something — out of wood, metal, plastics; we need materials from which to construct it. Actually, we are merely changing something which already exists. God does not. Creation means to bring forth something from nothing, to produce something and everything about it without the use of pre-existent matter. Sometimes we say loosely an artist creates a masterpeice, a songwriter, a song; but an artist needs paints and canvas; a songwriter, sounds, words, notes, etc. Both need energy and effort. God created out of nothing because he started with nothing, with no pre-existing matter, and he parted with nothing of his own Being in the act of creating.

The words, *"Now the earth was a formless void . . . ." (Gn 1:2),* clearly exclude the use of any pre-existing matter: creation is meant, not formation. As if this one passage were not plain enough, another makes it clearer yet: *"In the beginning*

was the Word . . . . Through him all things came to be, not one had its being but through him'' (Jn 1:1-3). If all things came into existence through the Divine Word, and not one thing exists (has its being) but through him, then obviously there was no self-existent, uncreated matter. God created everything in the strictest sense of the word, merely by the act of his will.

The words, *''In the beginning,''* also exclude the theory of uncreated matter always existing; so do the words of the psalmist: *''Before the mountains were born, before the earth or the world came to birth, you were God from all eternity and for ever'' (Ps 90:2).* Jesus himself said, *''Now, Father, it is time for you to glorify me with that glory I had with you before ever the world was'' (Jn 17:5).* The world, therefore, is not like the Son of God, from all eternity. Before creation, there was no universe, no mass of matter, no elements of any kind; in fact, there was not even time. There is no other way to interpret these passages from Scripture.

It may be that God first created the universe different from what it is now. It may have been in the form of a mass of unimaginable density, with forces to match; then, approximately twenty billion years ago, BANG (the big bang theory), an enormous explosion hurled parts of it away at immense speed (expanding universe), and these eventually formed into what we now observe in our universe. But there was a starting point to that primordial, compressed mass. God produced that mass, matter itself, in whatever its original form, from nothing; and into that matter he put forces which make it act the way it did and still does. Einstein's theory that matter is convertible to energy and vice versa does not invalidate the principle of creation.

Always existing is an infinite attribute, proper to infinite Being. Ascribing an infinite, limitless attribute to a finite, limited thing is against reason: people do this when they believe matter always existed, eternally (materialism, evolutionism, naturalism, pantheism). The whole visible universe, huge beyond our imagination though it is and whatever its history, is limited and changeable. These are attributes of a finite being, not of infinite Being.

Pantheism

Pantheism comes in many forms. In one way or another, it always identifies God with the world or its forces; it claims that God is the real, intrinsic being of things, the acting principle in the universe.

Such an idea contradicts ordinary experience and observation. According to pantheism, there is no multiplicity of being; all things are identified with the divine essence; *all is one and one is all.* Our reason and senses tell us differently. We see many different kinds of beings: stones, plants, cats, humans, each one with its own characteristics. I, as a human being, am not a plant, nor a stone, nor a cat. Living beings such as plants and cats are essentially different from non-living things such as stones and water. Plants act differently — and this is basic — from higher animals which have senses, emotion, etc. Human beings, the highest of all earthly creatures, can think, read, invent and freely choose, actions radically different from those of lower creatures. Where the properties and actions are so essentially different, there must also be an essential distinction of being (substance). There is not merely one being (substance); there are many.

Each one of us is conscious of his own thoughts, not of the thoughts of others; yet, if we were mere parts of one being (substance) we should be conscious of the thoughts of others as well as of our own.

The very notion of God contradicts pantheism. Though some philosophical considerations are difficult for ordinary people to understand (e.g., that infinite Being is *necessary, unchangeable, spiritual,* etc.), others are not. The fundamental error of pantheism is that it ascribes infinite attributes (''qualities'') to finite things.

God is infinite, boundless; to him we cannot impute limitations of any kind. He is infinitely perfect. By identifying the one supreme Being with limited beings such as ourselves, pantheism must also ascribe to him all the imperfections of finite beings. God is holy. In making him the internal cause of all action, pantheism must also recognize him as the author of

all sins, including the most horrendous crimes committed by human beings — a position which is utterly absurd.

If reasoned through to its conclusion, pantheism does away with all moral responsibility and all sin. If everything, including man, is merely an emanation of the infinite Being, if man with all his actions is only a mode or modification of the infinite, man's actions or omissions are not really dependent upon his free will. Where there is no free will, there is no responsibility, no fault, no sin. The general consensus of mankind is very different from this simplistic view.

God Created Freely

Evolutionary pantheists, whatever their name today, are not new. They were found in every period of history. Today, they use more sophisticated words and concepts but their theory is the same. Those who claim that God is some impersonal evolutionary force, or merely some dimension of the universe, are faced with a further question: was this divine force so inexorable, so inflexible, that it could not operate otherwise than it did? Is it still so tied to nature that it cannot act otherwise than it does? In effect, the questions are: was creation necessary; is this divine force (God) free now?

For the true believer, there is no difficulty: God created everything of his own free choice. God is infinite, God is perfect, so that he needed nothing, he would not benefit from anything. Just as the sun would shine even if there were nothing on which its rays would fall, so God exists even if there were no creatures from which he could get satisfaction. Aside from him, there was nothing, so how could something force him to create? The decision, to create or not to create, was his and his alone. As the psalmist said, *''Yahweh's will is sovereign'' (Ps 135:6).*

God was not even limited in his freedom to choose between this world or some other among the numberless possible worlds. The present universe is not the only one he could have made. Perhaps he did create other worlds with intelligent beings far more advanced than we

are. Our minds, after all, were darkened after the first fall. There may be races of intelligent beings "out there somewhere" on other planets who are not fallen, whose minds are not darkened, whose wills are not weakened and, consequently, who need not struggle to become enlightened, need no redemption, etc. If ever beings from outer space land on our planet earth (in U.F.O.s?), our faith need not totter for an instant.

Even we, with our limited minds, can conceive of other possible, better worlds, where all not only believe they are brothers, but act as such. We are a fallen race with weak wills and minds who have to sweat for a living in a world that is no longer a paradise. If man had not sinned, this world would be a Shangri-La, a lovely place in wich to live: no work, no worry, no tears, no suffering, no death (some of the preternatural gifts lost through the fall). When he created the world, *"God saw that it was good" (Gn 1:25).* Man's free will ruined it all. Even today, human greed and hatred continue to damage both mankind and the earth itself through the physical destruction caused by wars and pollution. Still, compared to what we know of other planets, the earth is not a bad place; it still grows our food, feeds the animals we eat, and each season renews its vesture to enchant our hearts.

God is not only a personal God, almighty and all-knowing; he is also a God of love and infinite goodness. Goodness is always inclined to extend to others; we call it benevolence. It was benevolence which prompted God to create. This tremendous love, this inclination to do good to others, however, did not *force* God to create since creatures are not necessary for his happiness or perfection. God is good, whether there are creatures to enjoy his goodness or not.

Creation, Mere Chance?

Some scientists claim that the world came about by chance. We speak of chance in games, in accidents, when someone is killed by a stray bullet during hunting, etc.

"It just happened," we say, "by chance." Chance in this sense is the unexpected result of some action, an effect occurring contrary to what we were looking forward to, sometimes resulting from a cause unknown to us. It is not an effect without a cause. This is against reason. Any thinking man will know every effect must have a cause, known or unknown, expected or not. We see the effect, the universe and everything in it, and they are finite things; they must have a cause. This cause we call God.

Chance does not explain anything about the origin of the world. It makes as much sense as saying a car jumped out, materialized out of thin air. Creation by God is a reasonable explanation of the universe's origin. This truth was summarized by the mother of the seven martyred sons in the last of the historical books of the Old Testament: *"I implore you, my child, observe heaven and earth, consider all that is in them, and acknowledge that God made them out of what did not exist, and that mankind comes into being in the same way" (2 M 7:28).* With these words she urged her last, her youngest son to die for that belief.

The Bible Account of Creation

The Genesis account of creation is not a science text for geologists, paleontologists, or biologists; nor is it a history textbook. On the other hand, it is not a fairytale either. Its aim is to impart a different kind of truth. The account of creation (the first three chapters of Genesis), for example, corrects paganism which either deified the forces of the universe (polytheism, pantheism), or credited evil forces with co-creation (dualism, Manichaeism). The pagans, who surrounded the Jews, almost never accepted the one true God as sole Creator. Genesis showed all of creation as the work of a personal God, all-powerful and good; also, that everything he created was good originally.

The Bible always tells the truth because it is God's word.

In doing so, it often uses figurative or poetic language. Not each and every word of Genesis need be taken literally, only the underlying truths. The Biblical "days" in the creation account, for example, can hardly be solar days as we know them, lasting twenty-four hours. The original Hebrew word *Yom* for "day," can mean an indefinite period of time; so the Biblical account does not contradict those scientists who calculate the formation of the earth, through geological strata, in billions of years. Each biblical "day" may have lasted millions of years or more.*

The findings of modern science indicate that God did not create this world as it is at present. The Biblical account does not dispute this fact. If God chose to proceed in this way, he was free to do so — but we must believe that he alone created the original matter and energy, and that he alone established the forces governing their actions and reactions. No scientific theory need disturb our faith in the Genesis account.

There are scientists, as we have mentioned, who advocate the "Big Bang" theory: that at first what is now our world was compressed into a single point whose density is beyond our comprehension. At a given moment, it exploded, creating both time and space so that parts of it were hurled away at immense speed, and the universe began to expand. If we prefer to believe this theory, fine, provided we credit God with the creation of that original explosion, including the forces through which it acted (and still acts). That is one essential truth, among others, which the author of Genesis wished to impart.

We know that first there was light, *"Let there be light, and there was light" (Gn 1:3)* (the original explosion?); then God *"divided light from the darkness" (Gn 1:4)* (the gradual cooling of gases into liquid?). The author of Genesis does not tell us whether by this light we are to understand the sun's light dimly penetrating through the clouds of

*It is interesting to note that although the *duration* of the biblical "days" is hard to determine, the *order* in which they succeed each other corresponds exactly with the order in which the creatures developed according to the scientific theory of evolution.

cooling gases, or light from a different source. Even if this process took billions of years, it was *Yom,* a period of time.

Then there was the division of waters above and below the firmament *(Gn 1:6-8),* a sky and water below it (the further cooling of gases into vapor and liquid). How long did this take? *Yom,* a period of time.

A separation of waters came and dry land appeared (the further hardening of the earth's crust. As its core shrank, its buckling crust produced mountains, higher and lower land). On land capable of bearing life, all kinds of vegetation appeared: God said, *"Let the earth produce vegetation" (Gn 1:9-12).* Whether God intervened directly to produce life out of inanimate matter, or indirectly in that from the beginning he established forces in matter which under appropriate circumstances would produce life, we do not know. The latter would seem to be the case if ever scientists, working with nucleic and amino acids, produce a speck of life in the laboratory. The author of genesis gives no hint of an answer to this problem one way or another, for it was not his concern.

Though light and air, the necessary conditions for vegetation, were previously mentioned, the sun and other heavenly bodies appear only in the fourth period. Was the earth so steamy and cloudy yet that the light of the sun and stars was not distinctly seen on earth before this time? It seems so, but whether these bodies already existed or not is not evident from the text. Moses speaks of the heavenly bodies in their relation to earth, nothing more.

When the earth produced vegetation, it could support lower creatures: first the sea teemed with life; then came all kinds of birds. This is logical: the animal kingdom can live only on organic matter.

The last period of creation begins: higher animals and, finally, man.

Geologists generally hold that organic nature came into existence in the order given by Moses: the lowest stratum of the earth's surface seems to contain chiefly the remains

of plant life; the next, fishes; the uppermost, land-animals. Others disagree. Again, it does not make any difference; perhaps Moses only intended to classify the *works* of God, not the *order* of their origin. Man was not to attribute divinity to the works of creation or to their forces. God alone is their creator and originator.

Evolution

The crown of all creation is man, a mysterious combination of matter and spirit, a body animated by a soul. Did the higher animals and man's body evolve from the lower forms of life? No one knows.

The Bible does not teach evolution; nor does it say anything to oppose scientific theories about bodily evolution. Once God had created the life-principle, evolution could have continued according to the natural laws which he also had created. Regarding man himself, God could have used an anthropoid, an animal sufficiently evolved and developed, and directly infused an immortal soul endowed with intelligence and free will. Was Adam made that way or was his body directly fashioned by God literally from clay? The Bible account does not concern itself with that question one way or another. The important thing was that God *"breathed into it the breath of life and man became a living person."*

This being called man, bound to visible matter by his body, was raised by God's breath, far above the rest of visible creations. Man's soul or spirit, his intelligence and free will made him the *image and likeness of God* who is spirit. This being, man, who is capable of spiritual activities must necessarily contain some element which is not material and does not owe its origin in any way to matter.

Was it possible that primeval matter had been programmed by God to evolve also into the spirit, the soul of man? No. Matter is material, endowed with properties diametrically opposite to spirit and is utterly inferior to it. Matter consists of parts, must occupy space, time, etc., while spirit, not having any of these properties, could not possible have evolved from matter. In short, such an evolution involves a contradiction.

This is why, in the making of every human person, God still must intervene directly by infusing an individual, immortal soul.*

In summary, scientific theories come and go, supplanted by others which seem to fit the evidence uncovered at any given time. We should never force Scriptures to confirm any fashionable theory. The Bible is neither scientific nor unscientific: its goal is on a different and higher plane. Nor should we understand literally every word of Genesis without making allowances for the author's style and oriental figures of speech.

God Continually Sustains the World

The might of God which created all things out of nothing is still operative, not only in the forces of nature which he established but, more importantly, in keeping everything from lapsing into nothingness. Scripture differentiates between creation of the world and its preservation. After telling us the Father made every existing thing through his Son, it adds that he is *"sustaining the universe by his powerful command" (Heb 1:2-3).* Addressing God himself, the author of wisdom puts it this way: *"Yes, you love all that exists, you hold nothing of what you have made in abhorrence, for had you hated anything, you would not have formed it. And how, had you not willed it, could a thing persist, how be conserved if not called forth by you?" (Ws 11:25-26).*

God conserves all things because he loves and cares for them. He continues to direct them for their original purpose, that is, for the sake of Christ. Paul writes to the Church at Colossae: *"All things were created through him (Christ) and for him. Before anything was created, he existed, and he holds all things in unity" (Col 1:16-17).*

God's continuing care extends *"from one end of the earth to the other, ordering all things for good" (Ws 8:1).* The psalmist summarizes it more concretely, more poetically: God, he says,

**Animals do not have spiritual souls because they lack the purely spiritual powers of reason and free will. Their life-principle, their "soul," is limited to the sensitive and material order, as study of animal psychology reveals. Animal behavior is chiefly determined by instinct and conditioned reflexes.*

"covers the heavens with clouds, to provide the earth with rain, to produce fresh grass on the hillsides and the plants that are needed by man, who gives their food to the cattle and to the young ravens when they cry" (Ps 147:8-9).

CHAPTER VI

The World of Spiritual Beings

"It's a bad time for angels these days," someone remarked the other day. Perhaps it is — for good angels at least. On the one hand, modern skeptics doubting everything that cannot be observed, measured and weighed, relegate angels to the realm of myth along with goblins, fairies and leprechauns. Some churchmen, too, have "downplayed" the existence of angels in recent years. On the other hand, the intense popularity of movies and books dealing with possession and exorcism have left the good angels out in the cold, giving exclusive headlines to the evil ones. From the viewpoint of today's communication media, it *is* a bad time for the good angels.

Angels, Pure Spirits, Do Exist

By angels, we mean purely spiritual and personal beings gifted with endowments superior to ours. Like people, angels are individual persons with mind and will; unlike people, they are not tied to any particular place, space or time, nor do they have weight, shape or form, or any visible parts. It is altogether impossible to verify their existence by any scientific, quantitative method or by empirical experience. Even our unaided reason cannot demonstrate the existence of angels.

How then do we know there are angels? Because God revealed it. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, provides us with a wealth of knowledge about angels, good and bad.

Angels in the Old Testament

The existence of angels is taken for granted almost from the beginning of the Old Testament. Its oldest books, however, contain scanty information, probably to forestall the Hebrews from idolatrous worship — a sin they committed all too often, influenced as they were by their pagan neightbors. In most ancient texts, the "angel of Yahweh" or the "angel of God"

refers not to a created being distinct from God, but to God himself in a form visible to men.*

Genesis does however, mention angels several times. After Adam's fall, God *"posted the cherubs, and the flame of a flashing sword, to guard the way to the tree of life" (Gn 3:24).* Jacob, in a dream, saw angels of God ascending and descending a ladder reaching heaven *(Gn 28:12).*

Later, in Babylon, an *"angel of the Lord came down into the furnace beside Azariah (Abednego) and his companions (Shadrach and Meshach)"* and protected them from the flames *(Dn 3:49-50).* The prophet Daniel had a lot to do with angels. The names of certain angels were revealed to him: Michael (in the guise of a Persian prince) as the angel guardian of God's people, and Gabriel who predicted the coming of Christ as the anointed Prince. The Book of Tobit recounts many exploits of the angel Raphael: ridding Tobias' wife of demonic obsession, leading and protecting Tobias himself on his dangerous journey to the country of his kinsmen, curing his father Tobit of blindness, and generally offering help and advice. *"I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand ever ready to enter the presence of the glory of the Lord" (Tb 12:15).f*

There are many other passages in the Old Testament dealing with messages and visits of angels (in Deuteronomy, Job, Judges, Numbers, Nehemiah, Isaiah, etc. Often, however, it is difficult to ascertain whether the reference is to a distinct spiritual being, or to a divine attribute.

Angels in the New Testament

The four evangelists record many items about angels; so do the apostles. These read almost like news flashes:

Jerusalem: Angel appears to Zechariah; he and his aged wife, Elizabeth, will become parents of a boy; name, John; he will become a great and famous man.

Nazareth, Galilee: Angel Gabriel visits Mary, a poor girl; she is chosen to become mother of the Christ.

Nazareth, Galilee: Worries of Joseph stemmed by angel;

**E.g., Gn 21:17, 22:11, 31:11; Ex 3:2, 14:19, 23:20; Jg 2:1, etc.*

Mary's pregnancy is not of any man but of the Holy Spirit, the boy must be named Jesus.

Bethlehem, Judea: Angel appears to shepherds in a blaze of glory; Christ born in a stable tonight; angels sing in the night skies.

Judea: King Herod's orders frustrated; angel forewarns Joseph of danger; innocents slaughtered at Bethlehem; holy family flees, now in Egypt.

Somewhere in Egypt: Angel informs Joseph, Herod dead; family moves to Nazareth, Galilee.

Desert somewhere in Israel: Jesus tempted by Satan after forty-day fast; good angels minister to him.

Capernaum: Jesus teaches that angels guard children, yet remain present before God the Father.

Jerusalem: Jesus undaunted by Sadducees; teaches no marriage in heaven, just like angels.

Gethsemane (near Jerusalem): Jesus arrested tonight; rebukes defender-friend, says more than twelve legions of angels could have helped him.

Jerusalem: Jesus rises from dead; angel rolls stone away; two angels tell women Jesus alive again.

Mount of Olives (Jerusalem): many see Jesus ascend to heaven; two angels appear as two men in white, tell followers he will return.

Jerusalem: Apostles arrested, locked in jail; angel comes at night, frees them.

Jerusalem: Herod Agrippa arrests Peter; angel rescues him night before trial; guards questioned; search is on.

Caesarea: angel of the Lord strikes Herod Agrippa with dread disease; tyrant dies, as worms eat away his flesh.

On and on, the New Testament tells of angels and their varied missions: in Acts, Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians, Hebrews, Thessalonians, Titus, Jude, Peter; especially in Revelation.

Angels Are Real, Individual, Personal Beings

There can be no doubt: angels do exist. Their actions make them real, individual and personal beings endowed with under-

standing and free will, distinct from God but inferior to him. St. Paul contrasts the Son of God with angels *"God has never said to any angel: 'You are my Son, today I have become your father'. . . . Let all the angels of God worship him . . . God has never said to any angel: 'Sit at my right hand and I will make your enemies a footstool for you.' The truth is they are all spirits whose work is service, sent to help those who will be the heirs of salvation" (Heb 1:5, 6, 13, 14).*

There are great numbers of such beings. Daniel and the Book of Revelation leave the impression of thousands upon thousands. The *myriads (Hebrews 12:22)* can mean thousands, millions, or simply countless numbers. Jesus himself said more than twelve legions (twelve times six thousand) could come to his defense immediately *(Mt 26:53).*

No one knows how different angels are one from another because the Bible does not say. It does, however, speak of nine different "choirs" of angelic spirits: besides angels, there are Cherubim (Genesis), Seraphim (Isaiah), Thrones, Dominations, Principalities, Virtues and Powers (St. Paul, to the Colossians and the Ephesians), Archangels (Thessalonians).

The Byzantine Liturgy of St. Basil (in its Eucharistic Prayer) enumerates these same nine choirs; so does the Rite of Holy Baptism (in its first prayer of exorcism). The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom mentions only four: "thousands of archangels and myriads of angels, Cherubim and Seraphim . . . ."

Angels Are Pure Spirits

The Scriptures call angels *spirits*. This means that, unlike human beings who are spirit and matter, they are not tied to anything material. A spirit has no flesh and bones. Being independent of anything material, angels are not confined to any particular place or time. This does not mean they are omnipresent, only that they can exercise their influence wherever they act on earth while remaining in heaven. This fact, which theologians call *agility*, probably accounts for the artists' conception of angels as winged creatures.

As spirits, angels cannot be seen unless they assume visible

form. In biblical history, they usually appeared in human form, as for instance two angels who appeared to Abraham and Lot *(Gn 18 and 19)*. The many people who saw Raphael with Tobias on his journey noticed nothing unusual about him. Raphael's human functions seemed completely normal, yet, as he said to Tobias, *"You thought you saw me eating, but that was appearance and no more" (Tb 11:19)*. The angels at the tomb of the resurrection appeared as young men *(Mk 16:5, Lk 24:4)*. Again, immediately after Christ's ascension, two angels took the form of two men in white, standing near the apostles *(Ac 1:10)*.

On the other hand, when the angel appeared to the shepherds on that first Christmas night, *"the glory of the Lord shone around them" (Lk 2:9)*.

Fallen Angels

Whenever we speak of angels, we mean good spirits. But there is another kind, evil spirits or devils. These are fallen angels, spirits who sinned by rebelling against God. No one knows how they sinned, because the Scriptures do not say.

In Revelation, St. John describes a fierce war between the good angels led by Michael and the rebellious spirits who were defeated and punished *(Rv 12:7-9)*. Jesus himself said, *"I watched Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Lk 10:18)*.

Their sin certainly was great enough to merit eternal banishment to hell: *"When angels sinned, God did not spare them: he sent them down to the underworld and consigned them to the dark underground caves to be held there till the day of Judgment" (2 P 2:4)*. Jude's position is similar *"Next let me remind you of the angels who had supreme authority but did not keep it and left their appointed sphere; he (God) has kept them down in the dark, in spiritual chains, to be judged on the great day. The fornication of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other nearby towns was equally unnatural, and it is a warning to us that they are paying for their crimes in eternal fire" (Jude 6-7)*. Though their punishment began immediately after their sin, fresh judgment will be pronounced upon them as well as upon evil men on the last day, that is, during the general judgment at the end of the world.

Jesus, too, taught that eternal hellfire is the lot of evil spirits, just as it will be for evil, unrepentant men: *"Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41).* By its nature, a spirit cannot feel the physical effects of fire, yet God, who is all-powerful, can give fire a supernatural capability of hurting evil spirits. On the other hand, some interpret hellfire rather as an intense and frustrated longing for God, which turns into hatred for anything that has to do with him and his works. Whatever its nature, this torment never leaves the reproved spirits. Their greater knowledge and intelligence only aggravates their sense of loss.

Evil Spirits Seek to Harm Us

Evil spirits, hating and envying us (since we can still love and serve God), seek to injure, to harm us. This is a fact. The Scriptures leave no doubt about it.

The tempter of Eve, disguised as a serpent but identified with the Adversary or the Devil,* is a being hostile to God and man. Typically clever, insidiously wily, the devil overcomes Eve's misgivings by assuring her that if she and Adam disobey God they will become God. They trust him, sin, and the human race is doomed to temporal misery since *"it was the devil's envy that brought death into the world, as those who are his partners will discover" (Ws 2:24).*

The New Testament often details the activities and strategy of evil spirits. Their number is *legion,* a biblical term for an immense multitude. Their being may be described as evil personified, total evil. They not only *cannot* but *will not* do anything but hate. In this total hatred of everything good (because it reflects God), all people are included.

Satan disguises all the grave sins into seeming virtues and goodness. To cloak his evil power, he appears weak. To mask his pride, he becomes timid, obsequious, even cringing. To cover his hatred, he appears as loving, well-wishing. From goodness, he makes evil; from evil, seeming goodness. Being

*In Jb 1:6, in the Book of Wisdom, in the New Testament and in all of Christian tradition. *Ac 20:31, 1 Co 16:13, Col 4:2, 1 Th 5:6, Rv 3:2, 16:15, etc.*

an angel of darkness, he poses as an angel of light.

All these traits are clearly portrayed in the New Testament and in Christian history. Jesus the Way, the Truth and the Life, himself has defined Satan as *"a liar and the father of lies," "a murderer from the start" (Jn 8:44).*

Satan Tempted Jesus

Jesus, despite his absolute power over evil spirits, was himself tempted by Satan. The threefold temptation of Christ tells us much about how the devil works.

The devil knew when Jesus would be at his human weakest, after he had fasted forty days and forty nights in one of the bleakest deserts on earth. Not until Jesus was faint, exhausted, lonely and friendless did the tempter come.

Against a backdrop of desolation with hunger and thirst gnawing at him, Jesus is offered the blandishments and cajoleries that have beset humans since Eden. "Think of yourself! You may die from your foolish fast; you may not live to do anything if you keep up this farce. Come on now, turn these stones into loaves of bread. It will prove you are the Son of God. Better yet, why not a ready feast. Just give the word!"

Jesus stands firm. The material promises did not work. Better use some finesse, even quote the Scriptures (Satan is a great quoter of God's words). Taking Jesus to Jerusalem, the devil makes him stand on the parapet of the Temple. "Come on, show your power! Maybe you have no power. Come on, use it if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. After all, the Scripture says, *He will put you in his angels' charge, and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone." (Mt 4:6).*

Better use something that seldom fails. "Look, why remain a poor, obscure, lonely man? You can become famous, mighty, greater than all the conquerors of history, Darius, Alexander, Caesar . . . all the Kingdoms in the whole world and their splendor can be yours. If you want it all, you can have it!"

Easy to resist? No, temptation never is. But Jesus does resist. "Be off, Satan," and drawing his answer from the Scriptures of long ago, he declares, *"You must worship the Lord your God,*

and serve him alone'' (Mt 4:1-11).

Jesus overcame. From then on, he showed his complete authority over evil spirits. He cast out many devils from many people with apparent ease. But Satan did not give up. Having tempted Christ once, he pursued him unto death. Satan it is who suggested to Judas Iscariot to betray the Lord *(Jn. 13:2).* Satan it is who exerted power over the apostles so that he might sift them as wheat *(Lk 22:31)* during those terrible hours before Golgotha. The final horrifying confrontation came at this *''place of the skull'' (Mt 27:33),* when the dying Jesus cried out, *''Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani''* — ''My God, my God, why have you deserted me?'' And the father of lies, a murderer from the beginning, became guilty, not only of homicide, but of deicide.

Satan Still Tempts

Even when the redemption was accomplished, Satan the all-evil being did not give up. Christ knew it. The apostles knew it. Throughout his preaching, the warnings of Jesus stand like signposts on the road to salvation: *''Watch, watch and pray'' (Mt 26:41).* These same signposts recur in the writings of the apostles. Among the more emphatic is Peter's: *''Be calm but vigilant, because your enemy the devil is prowling round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to eat'' (1 P 5:8).* Paul's warning is no less pointed: *''Put on God's armor so as to be able to resist the devil's tactics. For it is not against human enemies that we have to struggle, but against the Sovereignties and the Powers who originate the darkness in this world, the spiritual army of evil in the heavens'' (Ep 6:10-12).*

Then and now the devil's intentions are always evil. His tactics do not change, except perhaps to become more sophisticated, better suited to his victims. Never realizing his true purpose, always masking, disguising his designs, superior to all human psychologists, he adapts himself to people's temperament, character and tastes. The ambitious, he entices with power and glory; the bold and headstrong,

he urges to ever greater aggression; the pleasure-seeking, he seduces with the thrills of lust; the slothful and lazy, he entices with ease and comfort; the intellectual, he wins with pride and sophistry; the wordly, he besets with dreams of glory and success.

The beguilements of Satan always seem logical, accommodating and to the point. One of his best techniques is to foster disbelief in his existence, to show how ridiculous such a belief is in the eyes of sophisticated twentieth-century man. Hating God with all his being, Satan hates also the reflection of God in man and wants to ruin it, abuse it, and harm it for all eternity. Not all sin may come directly from the evil one: our own passions and external circumstances play a part in our falls — but even these he uses in order to tempt us. There is indeed a spirit of evil at work in the world. He can and does use people and human institutions to do his bidding. Recent history is proof enough of his action.

Spiritual harm is not the only kind he can inflict on man. He is capable of temporal afflictions also, as Tobit tells us *(Tb 3:8)* and as shown by the whole life-story of Job.

However wily and powerful Satan may be, we have the assurance of God himself that he will never allow us to be tempted beyond our strength: *"The man who thinks he is safe must be careful that he does not fall. The trials that you have had to bear are no more than people normally have. You can trust God not to let you be tried beyond your strength, and with any trial he will give you a way out of it and the strength to bear it" (1 Co 10:12-13).*

Demonic Possession

Possession by the devil is not a creation of the imagination: it is real. Evil spirits can indeed gain inner control of a living human being's body. Many times Christ drove out spirits from people. He and the apostles made a clear distinction between the sick and the possessed and between the persons possessed and the spirits who were in them. In the incident of the unclean spirits and the swine, for example, Christ allowed the unclean spirits

at their own request to take possession of the swine.

Since its very beginning, the Church has used ritual exorcism to counteract the power of evil spirits — and it has continued to do so until the present times. Some recent instances of possession, obsession and even physical assault are genuine, although many strange "psychic" phenomena may be explained by illusion, hysteria or fraud.

Guardian Spirits

In our fight against evil, in our struggle for salvation, we are helped not only by God's grace but also by good angels. This is God's truth: *"The truth is they are all spirits whose work is service, sent to help those who will be the heirs of salvation" (Heb 1:14).* As the being of devils is totally evil, so that of the angels is totally good.

Some people may influence us for good by truly inspiring words and deeds. Since angels are superior to us in almost every way, they too can influence our mind in a natural way by working on our imagination with sensible representations for good. An angel, for example, exhorted the apostles to preach the new Life *(Ac 5:20)* and Cornelius, a centurion, was encouraged by an angel to send for Simon Peter to instruct him in the faith *(Ac 10).*

Good angels protect us in body and soul: *"He will put you in his angel's charge to guard you wherever you go. They will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone" (Ps 91:11-12).* An angel protected Lot from the destruction of Sodom *(Gn 19);* An angel protected Tobias from various dangers on his trip. This protection extends not only to the just, but to every Christian. Jesus said of children, *"I tell you that their angels in heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in heaven" (Mt 8:10).* From this and similar passages the early Fathers concluded that little children as well as every individual person have a guardian angel. St. Basil, for example, says: "No one

will deny that an angel is present to every one of the faithful''' *(Adv. Eunom. III, 1)*, and Chrysostom, ''Near each of us angels are sitting...'' *(Hom 15, ad Heb., 10)*.

The early Fathers also taught that nations, cities and churches, each have a guardian angel. The basis for this belief seems to be a text from the prophet Daniel who wrote about guardian angels of the Jews, Greeks, and Persians *(Dn 10 and 12, etc.)*.

Byzantine Expression of Faith in Angels

Beginning with baptism when the priest prays God to assign the companionship of an angel of light to each candidate, Byzantine Christians carry their belief in angels into everday life. Often they express this faith in truly childlike ways.

All, from oldest grandparent to youngest child, with unwavering constancy include the angelic hosts in their daily prayers, morning and night: ''O heavenly powers, holy angels and archangels, pray to God for us sinners.''

The liturgy helps keep the fire of angelic devotion ever-kindled by dedicating every Monday of the year to angels. In the churches, the side doors of the iconostas(ion) each portrays a holy angel. At every Eucharistic Liturgy, in making the Little Entrance, the priest prays: ''Master and Lord, our God, you have established in heaven the orders and armies of angels and archangels to minister unto your majesty: grant that with our entrance may enter the holy angels who serve with us and glorify your goodness.'' Again, at the Great Entrance, all the faithful refer to the presence of angelic hosts as they sing the solemn, stately *Cherubikon* hymn: ''Let us who mystically represent the cherubim and sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-giving Trinity — let us now lay aside every earthly care. So that we may welcome the King of all, who comes invisibly, borne aloft by armies of angels. Alleluia.''

Especially popular among the Slavs is Michael the Archangel. Thousands of children, churches and monasteries are named after him. His feastday on November eighth is celebrated with genuine feeling.

Nearly every rite of blessing — from the cradle to the grave and beyond — includes a reference to the holy angels.

As the awesome specter of death draws near, the angels are not forgotten. In the *Office at the Parting of the Soul from the Body,* the dying Christian prays through the lips of the priest: "You my kinsfolk in the flesh, and you, my brothers in the spirit, my friends near and far, weep, sigh and wail: for lo, now I am departing from you... O my holy angels, having entered before the Judgment Seat of Christ and in thought bending your ethereal knees, cry to him with grief: O Maker of all mankind, have mercy on the work of your hands and cast it not away, O Good One" (Canticle V, *troparia* 2 and 4).

CHAPTER VII

Man, the Image of God

Man is matter-body and spirit-soul; his being is both physical and spiritual. Whether God created man's body directly from the clay of the earth or indirectly through an evolutionary process is unknown: scientific proof is still far from conclusive and God's revelation may be interpreted either way (see above).

Is it possible that man's spirit-soul also evolved from lower forms of life? Without offering any proof, some scientists believe that the whole of man evolved through a process totally within nature, from lower animal organisms.

Scientific data support the opposite: that man was man, and animal, animal. Cultural anthropology and all the known earliest archaeological remains point to the difference between man and beast; that man was always capable of reasoning, of thought-concepts, and had free will, the freedom to choose (even to the extent of giving up his life for something as abstract as his beliefs), traits completely different from the purely animal instincts of the irrational species. Driven by her instinct, a cow (or any animal) will give up her life for her calf but not for her religious beliefs or country like man will. The fact is that a cow cannot understand what religion or patriotism are. Man can. His psychological side (mind and free will) is totally unique and belongs to an order different from any lower organisms. The bridge between man and animal cannot be spanned through factual, scientific evidence.

The Creation of Man

This spirit-difference, essentially distinct from matter, must be uniquely created by God. That is the only explanation that makes sense. There is a difference in the way Scripture describes the creation of animals and man. Of animals Genesis says simply, *"God made every kind of wild beast, every kind of cattle, and every kind of land reptile" (Gn 1:25),* but in the creation of man it makes a distinction between formation of the

body and its animation by the breath of life: *"Yahweh God fashioned man of dust from the soil. Then he breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and thus man became a living being" (Gn 2:6-7).*

The spirit-soul difference is what chiefly makes a human being the image of God who is Spirit and Master of all. Mental capacity and will are what makes man *"the master of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild beasts and all the reptiles that crawl upon the earth" (Gn 1:26).* None of the animals have yet organized to master man.

Speaking of man's death, Ecclesiastes says: *"The dust returns to the earth as it once came from it, and the breath spirit to God who give it" (12:7).* It happens to everyone who ever walks the earth (death claimed Jesus and his Mother, but their bodies did not turn to dust). The soul of each of us, not being made of material like the body and not being dependent upon matter like the life-principle of beasts, is breathed into the body by God directly, that is, it is produced by God's immediate action independently of matter. Each soul is the direct product of God's creative act.

Coming from God, our soul is like God even by its nature. It is spirit endowed with an ability to think and reason (intellect) as well as with the ability to make decisions (free will).

Commands and punishment can be imposed only on free beings. Beginning with our first parents, God's frequent warnings to human beings constitute as many proofs of human freedom, of man's free will. Sirach, who penned Ecclesiasticus, puts it this way: *"He (God) himself made man in the beginning, and then left him free to make his own decisions. If you wish, you can keep the commandments, to behave faithfully is within your power. He has set fire and water before you; put out your hand to whichever you prefer. Man has life and death before him; whichever a man likes better will be given him" (Si 15:14-18).* Free will, like reason, elevates man above beast and brings him nearer to the perfection of God who is free in all his external actions.

Our soul by its nature as spirit, not being made up of parts, cannot be destroyed; it is immortal — another trait which makes

it more like God. The many passages of Scripture (and there are hundreds of them) promising eternal reward or punishment to man are further proof of the soul's immortality.

Intellect and free will are man's essential characteristics: they belong to his nature and are inseparable from it. That is why they were not taken away after the fall.

Because of them, man can truly be said to be the *natural* image of God.

The Sin of Man

"God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gn 1:31), including our first parents. But it was not to last. The third chapter of Genesis tells of their temptation and disobedience. Its language is figurative but the underlying truth is there: our first parents sinned, disobeyed God. The nature of their sin is disputed but malice lay chiefly in pride and disobedience; other passages of the Scriptures indicate this too *(e.g., Si 10:12ff., Rm 5:12ff., etc.).*

Sanctifying Grace, the Greatest Loss

What man lost through sin, Christ restored *(Rm 5:15-19).* Man's greatest loss was sanctifying grace, the life of God in him. It amounted to spiritual death. Sanctifying grace had given man a chance to become son of God, to see and enjoy God for all eternity. This Christ restored *(cf. Rm 8:17, Ep 1:3-8). "Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children; and that is what we are";* and *"My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is" (1 Jn 3:1ff.)*

Darkened Minds and Weakened Wills

Christ restored sanctifying grace to mankind. Other gifts, however, were not returned. Because of Christ's redemption, they will be restored to the elect in heaven. These gifts were gratuitious, in no way due to man's nature.

They include extraordinary knowledge and a will completely in control of the sensual appetites: *"He (God) filled them (our first parents) with knowledge and understanding and revealed to them good and evil. He put his own light in their hearts" (Si 17:5ff). "Both of them were naked . . . but they felt no shame in front of each other" (Gn 2:25).*

They felt no struggle of the flesh against the spirit, they were completely exempt from concupiscence, from inordinate passions. In their wisdom, they understood the true nature of things, their purpose, and had the willpower to fulfill what their wisdom dictated.

After the fall, man's mind was darkened, his will weakened. His built-in control was gone — and all the world has had to struggle ever since. Passion no longer heeds reason; the spirit may be willing but the flesh is weak, because man's nature became warped, within and without.

Other Gifts Lost

To describe what life would have been like on earth, had man not fallen, is difficult to put into words because it's beyond imagination.

Ask a man who has just lost his gentle, kindly wife of a racking cancer, or a mother who just buried her seven year-old daughter, raped and stabbed thirty times. Let the young lady speak whose only love died in a flaming tank on the Lebanese border. Knock on any door; is there a life unchanged, untouched by death and its agony? Yet, were it not for man's fall, there would be no death anywhere on earth! Beyond belief, absolutely incredible?

But it is a fact: *"Though your body may be dead it is because of sin . . ." (Rm 8:10); "Yet God did make man imperishable, he made him in the image of his own nature; it was the devil's envy that brought death into the world" (Ws 2:23-24). "Well then, sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned . . . death reigned over all from Adam to Moses, even though their sin, unlike that of Adam, was not a matter of breaking a law" (Rm 5:12, 14).* And, again, *"Death*

came through one man and in the same way the resurrection of the dead has come through one man'' (1 Co 15:21).

By its nature, the body tends to dissolution and death; yet, had man persevered in his state of innocence, God would have preserved his vitality, protected him from outward dangers and, finally, taken him into everlasting bliss without his having tasted death. Freedom from physical death implies all this and more.

With death banished from earth, sorrows, sufferings, anything leading to death, would also have had no place on earth! Freedom from sufferings and sorrow! Again, the very thought staggers the imagination.

Go to the hospitals of the world, its cancer wards, its geriatric centers and nursing homes. Take a good look. Hear the cries of pain, anguished and heart-piercing. Tell the patients they will suffer no longer — how could these bleeding, broken bits of humanity put their feelings into words? The man with no feet? The blind mother who would see the face of her own child for the first time? Are there words enough to say what would be in their hearts?

Imagine a world without cancer, starvation, free of arthritis and migraines, without cripples of any kind, a world completely without sorrow or tears, without worry or anxiety! The Bible gave it a name, paradise.

It was not to be, however. After man's fall, everything turned against him, the winds, the rains, locusts and pestilence, even the soil itself:

> *''Accursed be the soil because of you,*
> *with suffering shall you get your food from it*
> *every day of your life.*
> *It shall yield you brambles and thistles,*
> *and you shall eat wild plants.*
> *With sweat on your brow*
> *shall you eat your bread,*
> *until you return to the soil,*
> *as you were taken from it.*
> *For dust you are*
> *and to dust you shall return'' (Gn 3:17ff.).*

Man had to contend with it all with darkened mind and weak-

ened will, with passions unbridled. His children and children's children became murderers, drunkards and evil took hold of human hearts. And the world has not stopped crying since.

Was God Unjust?

We call it original sin, our paradise lost. It was the first sin, the original, committed on earth. Our first parents were personally guilty of it, we are not. But they and all of us have lost our glorious inheritance, something like millionaire parents squandering their fortune and leaving nothing for their children. Such children are born like ordinary babies but will not inherit any of the squandered wealth.

The simile is not exact but the idea is there. We are the children, Adam and Eve the parents. Their original good fortune, like millions of dollars, was not something due to their nature but an added bonus, added endowments by an all-generous God.

As human beings, our first parents were creatures of body and soul. All of us are. Their spirit-soul was immortal by nature; it would never cease to exist. Their body by its nature, like all living material things, was mortal, subject to dissolution and death and liable to all the things leading to death such as sickness, disease, etc. Their bodily immortality, therefore, was something beyond its nature, added to it by divine dispensation. So was sanctifying grace with its inherent right to see and enjoy God in heaven. These bonuses were outright gifts, in no way due to them, and conditional on their fidelity to God. In taking away these gifts from them and their descendants, God cannot be said to have acted unjustly in any way. The special gifts were not our right as human beings in the first place, so we are in no way wronged that they were taken away.

Furthermore, God in his goodness gives each and every one of us a chance to regain these gifts for all eternity by being personally loyal to him in his life. Because of Christ, we still have a chance. It is up to us.

PART THREE

THE HOLY MYSTERY OF CHRIST GOD AND MAN

CHAPTER VIII

Christ in History

Jesus and the Blind Man

He was there on the dusty road outside Jericho, a lonely, forlorn figure, hungry, always hungry — a blind nobody, begging. If anyone had asked him his name, he would have said: "I am Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus." But no one ever did: nobody cared. He was just a nuisance like the hundreds of other beggars who cluttered the byways of Palestine in that spring of A.D. 33.

He could hear many people passing by: something extraordinary was happening! But he could not make out from the snatches of conversation what it was all about and he was puzzled. Must be some regal party. Who was it? he asked. Jesus of Nazareth. He had heard of him, a kind man, a holy man who did not shun the bedraggled — and he cured people! He began shouting right away, *"Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!"*

He rushed into the middle of the road, staggering and falling, pushed this way and that as everyone brushed by.

"Hush up, filthy scum, who do you think you are!"

Picking himself up, he could not help his tears, they started streaming down his face like rivulets of brine. He could taste them as he shouted all the louder, "Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me!"

Nothing.

Everyone was passing on. It was too late, he thought bitterly, Jesus could not possibly have heard him over this din. Defeated, he sat down at the roadside and sobbed — big, retching sobs of helplessness. Nobody ever cared.

Suddenly, two hands gripped him, guiding him through the mass of people, "Courage, he is calling you." Then he heard the calm, untroubled voice. "What do you want me to do for you?"

Heart pounding, he knew it was the man from Nazareth, "Lord, I want to see." It came out of him with all the pent-up

feeling which years of helpless blindness had wrought. "Rabbuni, Master," he pleaded, "let me see again."

"Go. Your faith has healed you," said the voice.

Instantly, it is there: the crowd, the road, Jericho, and that good man. "My God, I can see! Lord, I can see!" He wipes the flood of tears with his ragged sleeve, but he cannot stem the flood of words, "My God, my all, I can see, I can see!"

He wants to stoop and kiss the feet of that good man from Nazareth, but Jesus had quietly walked away.

Christ Pinpointed in History

The cure of the blind man near Jericho is just an incident in the public life of Jesus of Nazareth, a life meticulously detailed in the New Testament. All the books and letters comprising the New Testament were written by men who either were eyewitnesses to the events or had interviewed eyewitnesses — by men such as Matthew, Peter and Paul who went to their deaths testifying to the truth of what they had written. Very few writers ever did that. Even besides their value as divinely inspired words, these writings are valuable historical records.

The evangelists pinpointed Christ's life in history. He was born when Octavius Augustus was emperor of Rome (31 B.C. - 14 A.D.), during a general census of the Empire. In Palestine, the census was organized by Quirinius, governor of Syria who was specially appointed for the purpose. Herod the Great was the tetrarch named in 41 B.C. by Mark Anthony, of Cleopatra fame. While scholars today argue about the exact year due to the inaccuracies of ancient calendars, the time is exact to within a few years.*

Jesus died when Pontius Pilate was governor (procurator) of Judea. Appointed by Emperor Tiberius (A.D. 14-37), Pilate held office for ten years (A.D. 26-36). At the time Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea (4 B.C.-39 A.D.), and at Jerusalem Caiaphas, son-in-law of Annas, was high priest that year.

*Our present calendar, with B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (Anno Domini, in the Year of the Lord) was originated by a monk, Dionysius Exiguus, quite a few years after the actual events. His estimate of the year of the Lord's birth is probably off by some few years. The precise date, however, is unimportant.

A contemporary, Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37-?100) confirms the positions of these personages in his *Hebrew Antiquities*.

Initial Impact of Jesus

Those who object that the powerful and the mighty among the contemporaries of Jesus do not mention him should remember that the life and teaching of Christ did not have a world-shaking impact at the time. Palestine was a backwater compared to other important provinces occupied by Rome. An obscure prophet rising among its people would have less of a chance of being noticed than a witchdoctor today in some remote corner of Africa. Jesus was a poor man from an obscure village in an insignificant country.

Under the circumstances, the detailed account of Christ's last three years of life is remarkable. The apostles were not journalists with tape recorders; at first, they did not think of writing anything. Only after several years did they being to write what they had witnessed or heard from eyewitnesses. This explains the discrepancies of some details of their accounts — the very thing we can expect in eyewitness reports. In fact, these slight discrepancies prove there was no collusion among the writers, no sitting down and agreeing on every iota before they wrote. As it is, their power of recall is excellent by any standard.

Those who doubt that Jesus ever lived should doubt the historical existence of almost every contemporary other figure.

Did Julius Caesar ever live? Did Alexander the Great? Did Darius? Their lives are not half as well documented as that of Jesus.

Those denying the historical existence of Jesus also have to explain away the historical records about the movement he started and which was carried on by his followers.

Early secular records about Christians, their doctrines, and especially later government efforts to annihilate the Christians physically are simply too numerous to refute. If the Christians had not been utterly sincere they surely would not have willingly gone to their death by the hundreds of thousands as they did for more than two and a half centuries.

Opposition From the Start

Hardly had Jesus expired when the Pharisees and chief priests, who had plotted his death, continued their scheming. Going to the Roman governor, Pilate, they petitioned him for a guard at the tomb, because, they said, the impostor predicted he would rise from the dead in three days. They understood that clearly. Though Pilate refused, they mounted their own guard so that his followers would not steal the body.

Early Sunday morning it happened, just as Jesus had predicted: first a rumbling, everything was shaking, the trees, the rocks, the earth itself; then a brilliant, blinding light. Someone was rolling away the massive stone from the tomb's entrance, a being with a face *"like lightning, his robe white as snow! The guards were so shaken, so frightened of him, that they were like dead men" (Mt 28:2-4).*

After it was over, some of the guards ran off *"into the city to tell the chief priests all that had happened. These held a meeting with the elders who, after some discussion, handed a considerable sum of money to the soldiers with these instructions, 'This is what you must say, "His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep." And should the governor come to hear of this, we undertake to put things right with him ourselves and to see that you do not get into trouble.' The soldiers took the money and carried out their instructions, and to this day that is the story among the Jews" (Mt 28:11-15).*

Christ's Word Did Not Die

Since the resurrection, hardly an age passed without opposition to Jesus and his followers. The persecutions are so well documented from both pagan and Christian sources that they need no repetition here. The fury unleashed by the full might of the Roman Empire for over two and a half centuries beggars description. For a longer time than the United States has been independent, Christians died on crosses, were hung on posts, smeared with pitch and set afire to light Rome's avenues, baked in ovens, torn apart by wild beasts in nearly every arena of the

empire, sewn into animal skins, set free in parks and hunted for sport — everything the ingeniosity of a cruel human mind could devise to eradicate the Christians. It was Rome's "final solution" — which never turned out to be final at all.

In desperate attempts to stamp out the Christians' ideas and doctrines, their sacred books were seized and destroyed time and time again. Hundreds died trying to save those books. Full-scale propaganda campaigns were launched, spreading vicious rumors about the Christians: that they indulged in incest, that they murdered babies ritually to eat them, to drink their "precious blood."

Intellectuals joined in the war of words to control people's minds. About A.D. 180, for example, Celsus, an educated, cultured Roman used his considerable talents to fight the Christians' claims. Absolutely absurd, he wrote. What, a god who wept? Who wailed and even allowed himself to be crucified? Probably an ambitious fanatic. The resurrection? A fairy-tale, clearly a fable of some disordered brain; no one can make any sense of it. But even as he wrote, hundreds, perhaps thousands were dying because they were convinced of the truth of all this.

A century later, Porphyry, a philosopher, penned fifteen monumental volumes against Christian beliefs. Not much is left of them, but what remains is the same old story: Could a god suffer, or a dead man rise again? Of course not, how could anyone believe such nonsense? Why did he not take up the challenge and leap from the Temple? Better yet, why did he not come down from the cross if he wanted to convince people?

So it went on, century after century. It still goes on: Jesus never lived . . . he did live, but was illegitimate . . . it was all a myth; he could not perform miracles, there had to be a natural explanation for these . . . He was a drug addict, a mushroom freak . . . He was not the Son of God; he could not be and he never claimed to be . . . He was a good man, a brilliant one at that, but not divine . . . He was not a man, he only appeared to be . . . He never rose from the dead, he only fooled those who thought they saw him alive afterwards . . . The litany never ends for those who refuse to believe.

Christianity Will Last If It Is Divine

As Gamaliel, a doctor of the Law, told his fellow members of the Sanhedrin about Peter and the rest of the apostles: *"If this enterprise, this movement of theirs, is of human origin it will break up of its own accord; but if it does in fact come from God, you will not only be unable to destroy them but you might find yourselves fighting against God" (Ac 5:38-39).*

The Christian movement did not die out. For almost two thousand years, often against seemingly insuperable odds, it continued to spread. Countries have fallen, disappeared completely; the mighty Roman Empire has disintegrated, leaving only traces upon the sands of time. In fact, not one human organization has survived during that time. Only Christ's Church has, because it is more than human.

Like its founder, at times it staggered, dripping with blood, but it went on; always buffeted from without, sometimes from within, it kept going. It is with us yet, ever-vibrant, ever-challenging. Its Christ is not dead, though countless opponents try to bury him now as they had tried for two millennia. He is alive, because he is from God. He is God!

CHAPTER IX

Jesus As Man

World history was never the same after Jesus lived on earth. Clearly human like us, Christ was also the Son of God: *"When the appointed time came God sent his Son, born of a woman" (Ga 4:4).* The chosen people expected a saviour: their prophets foretold it through the centuries. They had determined his lineage, the time and place of his birth, so much so that when John the Baptist appeared on the scene, *"A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ" (Lk 3:15).*

Dazzled by nationalistic dreams of greatness, the Jewish leaders expected their "anointed Prince" to redeem their nation from the Roman yoke — perhaps even conquer the whole world. The Prince of Peace did redeem their nation — and all other nations — and he did conquer the whole world — but not in the way they had expected. His kingdom was not of this world. So *"he came unto his own and his own received him not" (Jn 1:11).*

The Miraculous Virginal Conception

Mary lived in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. She was engaged to Joseph, a carpenter. The blood lines of both were distantly royal; they belonged to the House of David — but that did not mean much to them. They were poor, trying to make a living as were most of the other townspeople.

Nothing in Mary's short life had prepared her for the unique privilege of becoming the Mother of God's Son: nothing could have. Such a calling was unimaginable. Mary was *"deeply disturbed,"* when the angel Gabriel greeted her, but the angel reassured her: *"Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favor. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the house of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end."* Still puzzled, she asked the angel, *"But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?" "The Holy Spirit*

will come upon you,'' the angel answered *''and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called the Son of God'' (Lk 1:33ff.).*

And so it came about, her child was not of any man but of God. Long before, the Prophet Isaiah *(7:14 and 11:1-9)* had foretold that a virgin would conceive and give birth to a son, Immanuel, literally *God-with-us:* he would be of Davidic stock, from the root of Jesse (David's father).

Jesus was a descendant of David through both his fosterfather, Joseph, who was reputed his father according to the law, as the geneology of Matthew *(1:1ff.)* indicates, and through his mother Mary. Had she not belonged to the House of David, she would not have gone to Bethlehem to be registered there with Joseph in the city of David *(Lk 2:45).*

In the second century, a splinter-group of Christians called the Valentinians maintained that Jesus brought his body from heaven. As we see from the Scriptures, this is not so. Mary really conceived, not of man but of the Holy Spirit, carried him in her womb for nine months like any pregnant mother, and gave him birth, but never for an instant was his human nature separate from his divinity: otherwise Mary would have conceived, not the Son of God, but a mere human being.

Born in Bethlehem

Because of the general census requiring everyone to register in his town of origin, Joseph and Mary went to the town of David, Bethlehem. While there, Mary gave birth to Jesus. *''She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn'' (Lk 2:7).*

What seemed so ordinary was in fact completely extraordinary; nothing less than a divine intervention into human affairs. Angels appeared to shepherds watching their flocks in the fields. The news was electrifying: *''Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord'' (Lk 2:11).*

The long-awaited Saviour, the great one of Israel, was born unknown except for a few people who counted little in the eyes of the world. Yet, the prophets were right! Micah *(5:1-2)* had said his birth would take place in Bethlehem. The Jews knew it

too, for when the magi came and inquired, their learned men answered them correctly *(Mt 2:4ff.)*.

The time, too, was predicted, *"The sceptre shall not pass from Judah . . . until he come to whom it belongs" (Gn 49:10)*. Christ was born indeed when the sceptre had been taken away by Roman conquest; if it meant leadership of the House of Judah, it ceased when Herod, an Idumean and foreigner, occupied the throne; even if it meant the prerogatives of the whole tribe of Judah as a body, its independence and self-government was no more than nominal.

The Prophet Haggai (2:7-10) had foretold that Christ would come when the second Temple was still standing. The Temple was destroyed only after Christ's death, in A.D. 70.

Christmas Celebrated

Liturgical celebrations for Christmas in the Byzantine Church begin the day before the feast itself: the *Royal Hours* (so-called because emperors and kings usually attended them) are chanted and the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great together with solemn Vespers are celebrated.

The highlights of the Christmas celebrations themselves consist in Grand Compline with its All-night Vigil, Matins and the Divine Liturgy. The propers for each service deal with Christ the Son of God becoming man (the incarnation), and with his birth. Though often quite long, these services are beautiful and touching.

The home life of Byzantine Christians is always close to their religious celebrations; this is especially true of Christmas.

A few generations ago in the Ukrainian tradition many of the faithful abstained from all food on Christmas eve until sunset or until the first star appeared in the night sky. That star is still the sign for the home celebrations to begin. It represents the star of Bethlehem. When it appears, the father of the family gives the age-old blessing: "May God bring us all good fortune throughout the coming year, and let us thank him for his many blessings of the past. Christ is born!" The whole family answers, "Glorify him."

The supper-table has been set, a little hay spread under the

tablecloth (the hay symbolizes the manger of the Christ-child and the tablecloth, his swaddling clothes) and the gathering of the family begins for the traditional *Holy Supper*. Many families even set an empty place at table for any family member who died during the year. The table centerpiece consists of three loaves of braided bread, one on top of the other, and a lighted candle set in the topmost loaf. The loaves represent the Holy Trinity — God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit — and the candle, the star of Bethlehem.

Twelve meatless and milkless dishes, symbolizing the twelve apostles, are served. The first course is the traditional *kutia* (cooked wheat mixed with honey, chopped poppy seeds and nuts). After each course the family sings a carol.

During supper parents tell the children Ukrainian Christmas legends. An especially charming story, which seems to be common to all the Slavs of Eastern Europe, is about animals being able to speak to one another on Christmas eve in memory of Christ's birth in a stable. After the meal, the whole family sings traditional carols until it is time to go to church for Grand Compline.

After the church services on Christmas day, families visit each other's homes to enjoy one another in cheerful hospitality, in feasting and singing Christmas carols to their hearts' content.

The Massacre of the Innocents

Like all tyrants, Herod feared a rival for his throne. Outwitted by the wise men, he became furious and gave orders to kill all male children who were two years old or under in Bethlehem and its surrounding district. Christ would surely be among those killed, he figured, for he had reckoned the date carefully according to what he had been told by the wise men. The massacre was foretold by the Prophet Jeremiah *(31:15)*. Herod's order fulfilled the prophecy.

To Egypt and Back

Warned of the danger by an angel and told to escape to Egypt, Joseph did not hesitate. The family stayed abroad until Herod

was dead. Again, a prophecy had been fulfilled, *"I called my son out of Egypt" (Nb 23:22, Ho 11:1).* Joseph probably did not even know of this prophecy, nor of this other one, *"He will be called a Nazarene" (Mt 2:23).* When he took the family back to Israel, Joseph heard that Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great, had succeeded his father as ruler of Judaea, and he was afraid to settle there. Archelaus, if he ever found out about the Christ child, might scheme to have him killed, as his father had a few years before.

Nazareth was Joseph's second choice. Besides the dream he had had, it was natural for him to settle the family in Nazareth, since he had lived there before, and both he and Mary had made many friends.

Fulfillment of the Prophecies

Because Jesus was genuine, all the prophecies were fulfilled by events over which he had no control as a baby. There is no human way he could have fulfilled all that had been foretold in full detail about his miracles, and especially about his passion and death, centuries before the actual events.

Jesus Christ Is Truly Man

In the first centuries of the Christian era, the Docetists, believing that all matter was evil, claimed that Jesus had assumed only an *apparent* body.

If so, he would not have been truly human. In fact the nature of man belonged to him as did the nature of God: *"The Word was made flesh, he lived among us" (Jn 1:14).* Here, the word *"flesh,"* as in other Scriptural passages *(e.g. Gn 6:12)* means as we have seen the entire nature of man. The whole Prologue of John's Gospel bears this out. Jesus received his divine nature by being eternally generated of God the Father, but his human nature he received from a human mother: *"When the appointed time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman" (Ga 4:4).*

From the earliest days, the Christian Creeds stressed the reality of Christ's body and his whole human nature by insisting that "He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary, he suffered . . ." (Apostles'

Creed), and "by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary and became man . . ." (Nicene Creed).

Jesus did not merely play at being human! He was as human as any of us in everything but sin. Like all men, he was born a helpless baby, nursed and cared for by his mother. He learned to talk, sit, walk; he grew like any other child: *("And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature and in favor with God and men" (Lk 2:52).*

Except for the incident at the Jerusalem Temple where the twelve-year-old Jesus surprised the doctors of the Law with his intelligent questions and answers, there was nothing to distinguish him from any other youth. All through his hidden life at Nazareth, no one, except Mary and Joseph, even suspected anything unusual about him.

Later, it was not only his noble, miraculous feats but his thoroughly human traits which made Jesus lovable. As we go through the Gospels, we see the loving, gentle Christ as he really was. Behind every miracle was the tremendous love prompting it, the love which made the Byzantine liturgy coin a new title for him, "Christ the Lover of Mankind."

For instance, Jesus accepted an invitation to the wedding at Cana because he knew the young bride and groom would be happy and honored to have the famous rabbi at their simple feast in an obscure town. When the wine gave out, he performed his first miracle so that they would be spared embarrassment before family and friends.

When Jesus restored to life the daughter of Jairus, her parents in their ecstatic joy forgot about her physical welfare. Jesus did not: *"Give her something to eat" (Mk 5:43),* he told them.

Jesus worked a special miracle, multiplying the loaves and the fishes when the crowd of his followers ran out of food. *"I feel sorry for all these people" (Mt 15:32),* he said.

Like a skillful defense attorney, Jesus protected against her accusers the woman taken in adultery. After unmasking their self-righteousness, he sent her on her way with advice that would ensure her future happiness: *"Neither do I condemn you, go, and don't sin any more" (Jn 8:11).*

Jesus took the little children in his arms and blessed them. He asked not whose children they were, whether rich or poor, of

sinful parents or not; he simply loved them all.

Unlike the fiercely ascetic John the Baptist, Jesus loved to accept hospitality. He went to so many social gatherings and banquets and mixed so well with the guests that he was accused by his enemies of eating and drinking to excess. Jesus contrasts their unjust treatment of John and himself by quoting their accusations: *''For John the Baptist comes, not eating bread, not drinking wine, and you say, 'He is possessed.' The Son of Man comes, eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard'''* *(Lk 7:33-34)*. And the wonderful thing about Jesus is that at most of these gatherings he kept company with those who were despised, looked down upon, sinners and publicans: *''A friend of tax collectors and sinners,''* to use the Pharisees words *(cf. also Mt 9:11)*.

At times, Jesus felt lonely and forlorn, without a place to call his own: *''Foxes have dens and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head'' (Mt 8:20)*. Like the rest of us, he became tired *(Jn 4:6)*, hungry and thirsty *(cf. Lk 4:2, Jn 4:7)*. At Bethany there was at least one house where he could rest and relax, where he had good friends: *''Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus'' (Jn 11:5)*.

When Lazarus died, his sisters Martha and Mary were inconsolable: *''At the sight of her (Mary's) tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, 'Where have you put him?' They said, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept; and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!'''* *(Jn 11:33ff.)*

Another time Jesus wept over Jerusalem because its people refused to understand the message of peace *(Lk 19:42)*.

In Gethsemane the night before Jesus died, *''A sudden fear came over him, and great distress . . . 'My soul is sorrowful to the point of death'''* *(Mk 14:34)*. After a sleepless night, he suffered the excruciating pain of the scourging, the thorns piercing his head, the jeers, the insults, the struggle of carrying the cross, the nails being driven through his hands and feet, the three hours of agony as he hung on the cross and, finally death itself. The pains were real, his death was real.

Jesus wanted to become one of us so that he would be our

brother, that is why *"he took to himself descent from Abraham. It was essential that he should in this way become completely like his brothers so that he could be a compassionate and trustworthy high priest of God's religion, able to atone for human sins. Because he has himself been through temptation he is able to help others who are tempted" (Heb 2:16ff.).*

Jesus Assumed an Entire Human Nature

Jesus was a true man in every way. He took to himself everything human, that is, not only a real human body with its senses, but also a human soul with all it faculties of mind, emotions, and will.

A fourth-century Syrian bishop, Apollinaris, denied that Jesus had a human soul, but thought that his divinity animated him, that the divine Person had taken the place of a human soul.

This is contradicted by the Scriptures which teach that Jesus *"gave up his spirit" (Jn 19:30).* If he did not have a human, rational soul or spirit, he could not have given it up. As with all men at death, his soul separated from his body.

That Jesus had a human mind or human intelligence is evident from the fact that he *"increased in wisdom" (Lk 2:52);* as God, he was all-wise, he could not have increased in wisdom one whit. In addition to his divine will, he also had a human will. In his own words, he was giving up his life voluntarily, *"No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will" (Jn 10:18).* Later, in the garden of Gethsemane, he submitted his human will to the will of God, *"Nevertheless, let it be as you, not I, would have it" (Mt 26:39).*

Because Jesus had a true human body with its senses and a soul with emotions, he was capable of suffering for us. As he said the night before he died, *"My soul is sorrowful to the point of death" (Mt 38). "In his anguish he prayed even more earnestly, and his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood" (Lk 22:44).* To make sure Christians understood this clearly, the early Creeds stressed his sufferings and death. The Apostles' Creed, for example, has, "He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;" and the Nicene, "for our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered, died, and was buried."

CHAPTER X

Jesus as God

A God-man! How could it be? God-as-man walked into the midst of human history! Ever since an individual called Jesus had been executed in Palestine about the year A.D. 33, so very many have thought about it and wondered. Jesus truly human, a man like the rest of us, and truly divine, God, infinite Being! And dying for us! How could it be?

The finest minds on earth spent a lifetime studying and pondering divine mysteries, especially the mystery of Jesus, the decisive point of all human history.

The questions about Jesus, with their tremendous implications, shook the Church in the first five centuries. At that time so many things about Jesus were discussed one wonders whether anything really new can be added. History is repeating itself today in different circumstances, perhaps in more sophisticated concepts and words, but none of the modern errors about Jesus are new.

The Miracles of Jesus

The record of the miracles performed by Jesus is far from complete *(cf. Jn 20:30),* but enough of them are described in the Gospels to put Jesus far above anyone else. Some miracles we have already described, but there were many others: calming the winds and the waves *(Mt 8),* healing the sick of all kinds of diseases including leprosy *(Mt 15, 39),* curing the crippled, the blind, the deaf, casting out devils, raising people from the dead, including Lazarus whose body was already decomposing.

Jesus performed these wonders publicly, in the presence of friends and enemies. Even they could not deny them.

When John the Baptist sent his followers to ask Jesus whether he was the long-awaited one, or would they have to wait for another, he answered: *"Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear and the dead are raised to life and the Good*

News is proclaimed to the poor and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me'' (Mt 11:33ff.).

Jesus did this because John would remember what Isaiah had prophesied of the Messiah-Saviour: *''Courage! Do not be afraid. Look, your God is coming, vengeance is coming, the retribution of God; he is coming to save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unsealed, then the lame shall leap like a deer and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy'' (Is 35:4ff.).*

Jesus performed miracles, not that people would admire him, but that they would believe him and his teaching. In order to show he had the power to forgive sins, he demonstrated his power to cure the paralytic. His enemies believed he was blaspheming, for *''Who can forgive sins but God alone?''* He replied, *''Which of these is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But to prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins — he said to the paralyzed man — 'I order you: get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home''' (Lk 5:20ff.).* He proved his point; the man got up in the sight of all and went home.

Ordinary people understood this, but Jesus' enemies refused to believe it. After grilling the man born blind whom Jesus had cured, the Pharisees reviled him for his belief, stating they did not know whether Jesus was from God. The man rightly answered, *''Now here is an astonishing thing! He has opened my eyes, and you don't know where he comes from! We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but God does listen to men who are devout and do his will. Ever since the world began it is unheard of for anyone to open the eyes of a man who was born blind; if this man were not from God, he couldn't do a thing'' (Jn 9:30ff.).*

Jesus did work miracles, so he confirmed his claim. As he himself said, *''if you do not believe me, believe my works'' (Jn 10:38).*

John ends his Gospel account with these powerful words: *''There were many other signs that Jesus worked and the disciples saw, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through*

his name'' (Jn 20:30-31).

Jesus Christ Is the Son of God

There are many today, as there were all through Christian history, who hold that Jesus never claimed he was the Son of God. Nothing will convince those who refuse to believe. There were many who saw Jesus work miracles and heard him teach, yet refused to believe him. Things are no different today.

Jesus definitely claimed to be Son of God and he died for those claims. His enemies clearly understood him, but called his claims blasphemous. Now blasphemy was a crime worthy of death. At the trial before the Sanhedrin, the high priest finally put the questions to Jesus pointedly, *'''Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?' 'I am,' said Jesus, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.' The high priest tore his robes, 'What need of witnesses have we now?' he said. 'You heard the blasphemy. What is your finding?' And they all gave their verdict: he deserved to die'' (Mk 14:61ff.).* The high priest used the expression ''Blessed One'' as a substitute for God (Yahweh), which the Jews would not pronounce out of reverence. Besides answering clearly that he was indeed the Son of God, Jesus alluded to the General Judgment, reiterating what he had taught before: that he was the judge. *(Mt 25:31-36)* — a divine prerogative.

Once before, Jesus' enemies had tried to kill him by stoning when he had applied to himself names proper to God such as the ''I am'' of Exodus *(3:14),* signifying the eternal presence and reality of God: *''I tell you most solemnly, before Abraham ever was, I Am'' (Jn 8:58); ''Yes, if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins'' (Jn 8:24).*

Another time, at the feast of the Dedication during his final year on earth, Jesus was again almost stoned. He asked his enemies why. They answered *''For blasphemy,''* for *''you are only a man and you claim to be God'' (Jn 10:33).* They understood his claims better than most people do today.

Jesus also used many expressions which only apply to him as God: *''I am the resurrection. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in*

me will never die'' (Jn 11:25-26); ''I am the Way, the Truth and the Life'' (Jn 14:6); ''I am the light of the world; anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark; he will have the light of life'' (Jn 8:12); ''Whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day'' (Jn 6:40).

Divine attributes shine through the words of Jesus to Nicodemus: *''No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven; and the Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved'' (Jn 3:13ff.).*

Finally, in his farewell talk at the Last Supper, Jesus identified himself with the Father so many times that his claims to divinity cannot be challenged seriously.

Certainly, if Jesus were only a prophet, a mere man however wise and holy, he would not have let anyone call him God. Yet, he accepted assertions of divinity without protest. For example, after Peter tried to walk on the water with Jesus, *''the men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God''' (Mt 14:33).*

At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus himself put the question to his disciples. *''And you, who do you say that I am?'' (Mt 16:15)* Simon Peter acknowledged Jesus both as the Messiah and as the Son of God, *''You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'' (Mt 16:16).* In answer, Jesus called Simon blessed, *''Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven'' (Mt 16:17).*

Even the demoniacs of Gadara acknowledged the divinity of Jesus: *''What do you want with us, Son of God?'' (Mt 8:29);* so also the devils Jesus cast out from people at Capernaum *(Lk 4:41).*

Finally, the resurrected Jesus accepted Thomas' supreme confession of belief in his divinity when he asked him to put his

fingers into the marks of the nails and his hand into his side and Thomas exclaimed,'' *''My Lord and my God!'' (Jn 20:28)*

On at least two occasions, God the Father plainly revealed that Christ indeed was his Son: at the baptism of Jesus, a voice spoke from heaven, *''This is my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on him'' (Mt 3:17);* and in almost identical words at the transfiguration, *''This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favor. Listen to him'' (Mt 17:35, Lk 9:35).*

St. John, the disciple especially loved by Jesus, heard his claims many times. John expresses the divinity of Christ clearly and precisely. The whole Prologue to his Gospel, for example, identifies Jesus with the *Logos,* the Word of God. The Word of God was a Person existing *''in the beginning''* with God and *''the Word was God.'' ''Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him.'' ''The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth'' (Jn 1:1-18).* In fact, all through his Gospel, St. John seems to use every opportunity to impress upon us the fact that Jesus is divine, is God.

St. Paul, too pays Jesus divine honors accepting him as creator and sustainer of all things: *''For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, everything visible and everything invisible . . . all things were created through him and for him. Before anything was created, he existed, and he holds all things in unity'' (Col 1:16-17).* Paul quotes the Father as addressing Christ as God: *''But to his Son he says: God, your throne shall last for ever and ever'' (Heb 1:8).* Paul confesses Christ as God when he urges Titus to live in virtue: *''We must be self-restrained and live good and religious lives here in this present world, while we are waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the Appearing of the glory of our great God and saviour Christ Jesus'' (Tt 2:12-13); cf. also 2P 1:1, Rm 9:5).*

Jesus as Defined in the Creed

Through his divine nature, Jesus is God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, absolutely equal to the Father and the Holy

Spirit. In order to make sure that everyone recognize that he is in no way less than the Father who generates him, the Church — countering the false doctrine of Arius, a priest of Alexandria — chose its words carefully: "We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father. Through him all things were made."

Christ is the "only Son of God," and is "eternally begotten of the Father" to contrast his origin from the origin of all other beings, like angels and men who are called sons of God in a different way. This is further elaborated in "begotten, not made." Unlike other generations, this one is unique in that no new being results.

Christ is "God from God" to show that he perfectly shares the one and the same divine nature. In order to avoid any doubt, the creed goes on to emphasize that he is fully divine, "true God from true God." Yet, Father and Son are really distinct, because one originates and the other is originated.

Christ is Light of Light. St. John, in his Prologue, calls God the Word light. This too points to total equality within the Godhead. Whatever the light of the Father's glory is, so is the light of the Son's.

The Son is "one in Being with the Father," or as the Greek has it, "out of the Being of the Father." The Father and the Son are two individuals, but they have only one divine nature or substance.

Again, absolute equality of Father and Son is brought out in the fact of creation: "All things were made through him." He is the Creator of all things, as much as the other two Persons of the Trinity. Since he is Creator, he is not created in any way.

The Hypostatic Union

The *hypostatic union* is the union of God's Son with a human nature. When God formed a human nature in the womb of the Virgin, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity became one with it. When this happened, no new person resulted — the Person, the Son of God already existed. Rather, he began to live in a new

nature, a human nature.

This union with a human nature was much more than moral or spiritual. Nestorius, a bishop of Constantinople in the fifth century, claimed that the Son of God dwelt in the body of Christ only as in a temple or as God dwells in the just. According to him, Jesus was actually two persons, though he appeared to be one.

Every living being acts according to its nature: plant, animal, fish. Brute animals and fish digest, assimilate, reproduce, walk, run, or swim, each according to its kind. When someone does something, thinks, reasons, suffers or makes a decision, he acts humanly, by his nature as man. Some of his activities are animal-like: digestion, locomotion, etc. But man is different from brute animals in that he can think, reason, and make decisions because of his human nature. Yet, his rational actions are attributed to him as an individual, a person. Each man is an individual person possessing only one nature.

Jesus, on the other hand, is one divine Person, but he has two natures, divine and human. His actions, whether human or divine, are attributed to the one subject, to the one Person, who is the Son of God. He himself said, *"The Father and I are one" (Jn 10:30),* thereby ascribing to himself the same divine nature as that of the Father. Yet, possessing also a human nature, Jesus acts through both: being one Person, a divine one, all his acts are divine.

"This has taught us love — that he gave up his life for us" (1 Jn 3:16); here, the Scriptures speaking of the Son of God say that *he died* for us; he suffered death, not in his divine nature (as God he could not die!) but in his human nature — yet all his acts have to be attributed to his Person, the divine One. If he were not the Person of God's Son, the Scriptures could not say the Son of God suffered and died for us — but only the man Jesus.

If only a moral union existed between the second Person of the Trinity and his human nature, as Nestorius claimed, the Scriptures could not really say all the things they do about Christ (that *he* was made man, that the *Word* was made flesh, that he suffered and died for us). God does not *become* the temple in which he dwells, nor does he become the just man he sanctifies.

Nestorius was wrong; the union in Jesus is a real one in virtue of which one Person possesses a divine and a human nature, and is at the same time God and man.

Natures Unmixed, Unconfused, Unchanged

At the other extreme is the heresy of Eutyches, an archimandrite (major superior) of a monastery in Constantinople. In his zeal to combat the teaching of Nestorius, he taught that before the incarnation there were indeed two natures, the divine and human, but after the incarnation, only one.

As we have seen, Scriptures, clearly teach that Jesus is true God and true man. He can be true man only if his humanity remains unchanged — for all beings are named after their nature.

Three relationships are possible, in which the resulting union would preclude the possibility of Christ being both God and man:

1. If Christ's humanity were *absorbed* by his divinity, like a drop of water in a lake: then he would cease being a man. Nor would he remain God, for his divinity would be changed (as the water in the lake is not the same after the addition of even one drop, for there is now some little water that had not been there before).

2. If both divine and human natures were *blended* together, as two kinds of liquor are mixed, the mixture would be something new, neither divine nor human. In such a case Jesus would be neither true man nor true God. Besides, the divinity would be changed and would lose its simplicity.

3. If the two natures *completed* each other, like body and soul in man, then too they would form a third nature distinct from both. Christ would be neither God nor a man, but a compound of both.

All this merely serves to show that the hypostatic union, making the incarnation and the redemption by Jesus possible, is not against reason. Its mystery remains. In final analysis, it means that Jesus was both God and man as he claimed. It also helps us understand better some of the other truths about Jesus, such as his two wills, his sinlessness and knowledge.

Two Wills in Jesus

The last great controversy about Christ took place in the seventh century. Called Monotheletism, it claimed that Jesus had only one will, the divine, because his human will was absorbed into his divine nature.

The Church, on the other hand, had always taught that the two natures of Jesus are completely intact and unconfused; so are his two wills one proper to each nature. In other words, as God, Jesus has a divine will and, as man, he has a human will. This is obvious also from Christ's words in Gethsemane when he prayed to the Father, *"Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine" (Lk 22:42);* that is, not the human will of Jesus but the Father's divine will, which is also the divine will of the Son.

If Jesus human will had been absorbed by the divine, as the heresy of Monotheletism claimed, or even if his human will were only a passive instrument (his divinity acting on his humanity as a musician on a lifeless instrument), Jesus would not have an entire human nature and would not have been like us in all things (but sin) — as he is according to Scriptures.

The Sixth Ecumenical Council carefully worded its statement of the true faith: "In accordance with the teaching of the holy Fathers, we likewise preach two natural wills and two natural operations in him . . . His human will follows without resistance or reluctance, but is subject rather to the divine and omnipotent will" (Act XVIII).

Christ's human will was entirely free but totally sinless: *"He had not done anything wrong, and there had been no perjury in his mouth. He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when he was tortured he made no threats . . ." (1 P 2:22f).*

God who is perfectly free is incapable of sin. Christ's human will, notwithstanding its freedom, was incapable of sin just as his divine will. The responsibility for all his actions rested with the Person performing them, and that Person was divine, the Son of God, a Person totally incapable of doing wrong, of sinning.

Jesus was tempted, but he never had any inner inclination

toward evil; his temptation came entirely from outside by diabolical malice.

Christ's Knowledge

Christ's human intellect, his mind, increased with experience and human contact. That is why the Gospel could say he *"increased in wisdom" (Lk 2:52).* And that is why he himself could say he did not know when the end of the world would occur *(Mt 24:36).* Some understand this statement to mean that he did not have natural human knowledge on the matter. Others say he had no knowledge he could communicate to us on the matter — this seems unlikely since he knew other future things, even those depending on the free will of other people. He knew Peter would deny him, that Judas would betray him, that he would be killed and that he would rise again. So, besides human knowledge gained by natural means, Jesus had other kinds of knowledge.

Being God, he saw his Father, knew him immediately and intimately: *"No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is nearest to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (Jn 1:18)* He himself said, *"But I know him, and if I were to say: I do not know him, I should be a liar . . . But I do know him" (Jn 8:55).*

He also knew everything concerning his divine mission on earth, not only saving sinners *(Lk 19:10)* and bearing *"witness to the truth," (Jn 18:37)* but, also seeing through the hearts of men *(e.g., Mt. 20:18f., 26:21ff., 24:5ff.)* and in general being *"the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14:6).* In a word, this divinely infused knowledge made him all things to all men.

Despite having *"all the jewels of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3),* Jesus was a humble man, thoroughly human, with warmth of understanding, compassion and love for all people, saints or sinners alike.

The Celebration of Christ's Divinity

Eastern Christians have celebrated Epiphany as early as the second century. In Greek *epiphania* means a manifestation or a

revealing. The word, as applied by the Christians to the life of Jesus, meant the manifestation of his divinity. The Byzantine-Slavs specifically call the feast *Bohoyavlenie,* literally, a manifestation of the Godhead, of the Holy Trinity. This manifestation took place at the baptism of Christ: *"No sooner had he come up out of the water than he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on you'" (Mk 1:10f).* Here we have the Father speaking, the Son being baptized and the Holy Spirit appearing in form of a peaceful dove.

So far this was the clearest revelation of the triune God (the Holy Trinity) in the Scriptures. No wonder, then, that the early Fathers also used to call this feast the "Day of Illumination" or the "Feast of Lights"; in other words, light or illumination was shed on the Godhead. Eastern liturgical books still call the Sunday before and after Epiphany the Sunday before the Illumination and the Sunday after the Illumination. In the early Church, solemn baptism of the illumined, of those in the final stages of instruction in the faith, was imparted on the eve of the Epiphany.

The Solemn Blessing of the Water on Epiphany to commemorate Christ's baptism in the Jordan is probably a remnant of this ancient practice, although Armenian sources state that the Solemn Blessing of Water was composed by St. Basil during his visit to Jerusalem in A.D. 377. The ritual had been used at Antioch in A.D. 387, for that year Chrysostom preached a sermon in which he stated: "This is the day on which Christ was baptized and through his baptism sanctified the element of water. Therefore, at midnight on this feast, all the faithful draw of the holy water and store it in their homes, because on this day the water is consecrated."

The custom is still very much alive today and is one of the highlights of the Byzantine church year. It is called the Office of the Great Blessing of Waters at Holy Epiphany. Like so many Byzantine services, it is modeled on the Divine Liturgy, except that three readings from the Prophet Isaiah precede the Epistle and Gospel. The petitions of the *ektenia* (litany) following the Gospel are many and varied, chiefly dealing with the many

spiritual and physical benefits coming upon those who use the holy water with piety and faith.

While there may be some difference in detail, all Byzantine Churches have preserved the three triple blessings over the water. The first is done by dipping a triple, lighted candle into the water; this symbolizes the baptism of Christ who, as Son of God and *"True Light"* of the world *(Jn 1:9),* stepped into the waters of the Jordan to wash away the sins of mankind. Then, by breathing three times upon the water as a sign of the imparting of the Holy Spirit, the priest performs an exorcism to purify the water from the influence of any evil power. He imparts the second blessing by dipping his fingers three times into the water and making the sign of the cross in it. He imparts the final blessing to the water by immersing the hand-cross and tracing the sign of the cross with it three times in the water.

The ceremony is concluded by sprinkling the altar and the walls of the church with the newly-blessed water. The faithful come up in single file singing the propers of the feast, to kiss the holy cross and to be sprinkled with the holy water as a token of their redemption through the reception of the blessing of the Jordan.

Finally, the faithful fill their containers with holy water to take home as a continued blessing and protection against evil. It is also customary for them to sip some of the water for the "purification of their souls and bodies and to cure their weaknesses." The practice is probably as old as the ritual itself.

Another touching tradition, still widespread in Byzantine parishes today, is the blessing of homes: the priest visits each home in his parish to bless it by sprinkling the "waters of the Jordan" and by invoking God's blessing and protection upon the dwelling and those living in it.

CHAPTER XI

Jesus Reedemed Us

Jesus knew he was going to die. But first, he wanted to eat one last meal with his own, to tell them of his love and to say farewell.

He had to tell them many things before it was too late, to share his feelings with them, his thoughts. *''He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was'' (Jn 13:1).* Their dreams of earthly greatness would come crashing down with his death, leaving them numb with shock, speechless with fear. Somehow Jesus had to make them understand God's ways, the ways of love: that love can make a man give up his life for others. Perhaps he could make them realize what he was doing for them, for their countrymen, for all mankind.

The Last Supper

In the upper room with all twelve of them around him, Jesus felt closer to his friends than ever before. They were good-willed and good-hearted, all of them except one. They had believed him, left everything — not much, a few broken-down boats and nets that needed mending, but it was all they had — and followed him. Yes, they were good men despite their weaknesses, and he loved them. They were a long way from being saints, but that, too, would come later. Soon Satan would buffet them, sift them as wheat.

Satan already possessed Judas Iscariot. The thought sickened Jesus. Already Judas had entered into a bargain to betray him for thirty silver pieces. The prophet Zechariah had foretold this treason hundreds of years earlier: *''And they weighed out my wages: thirty shekels of silver...this princely sum at which they have valued me'' (11:13).* Jesus was being sold by a man he had chosen, who had walked with him for three years, heard him preach, seen him cure all those people — but nothing had softened that greedy heart.

Events moved swiftly: the Twelve bickered over precedence, Jesus washing their feet as a lesson in humility, his

indication of the betrayal, and Judas' departure.

Jesus loved his disciples so much that he wanted to be completely united with them by changing the bread and wine into his real self, and offering himself to them as food and drink. Perhaps they would not yet realize fully what this meant, but they would understand it later, and call it the Eucharist. He was about to give them the tremendous divine power to do the same: to transform bread and wine into his living body and blood, soul and divinity, so that they could remain in union with him forever. By entrusting this power to them, he was to extend it to their successors, bishops and priests, until the end of time.

"Making" the Eucharist

The disciples sang the *Hallel* psalms, answering Alleluia after each half-verse. A hush, a holy quiet settled over the group as the bread-breaking ceremony was about to begin, a ceremony in which the bread was blessed, divided, and distributed to those present. This was the traditional sign of being "one company," "one family." On this day for the first time there was to be, not a mere sign of unity, but actual union with Christ.

"Jesus took some bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to the disciples. 'Take it and eat,' he said, 'this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and when he had returned thanks he gave it to them. 'Drink all of you from this,' he said, 'for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is to be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. From now on, I tell you, I shall not drink wine until the day I drink the new wine with you in the kingdom of my Father' " (Mt 26:26-29).

Jesus was now one with them, truly one, his body and blood mingled with theirs. No closer union could be effected, not even in marriage. This would become known as Holy Communion.

The Farewll Talk

Still at table in the hush of the upper room, Jesus began: *"My little children, I shall not be with you much longer. You will look for me, and, as I told the Jews, where I*

am going you cannot come. I will give you a new commandment: love one another; just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples'' (Jn 13:33-35).

The disciples still did not realize their Master's death was at hand. *''Simon Peter said, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus replied, 'Where I am going you cannot follow me now; you will follow me later.' Peter said to him, 'Why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.' '' (Jn 13:36).*

Simon Peter was always like that: making promises without estimating the cost, without thinking. His goodness of heart impelled him to be impetuous. Jesus knew this goodness in him, but he also knew how weak he was: as soon as difficulties would arise he would give in.

Looking Simon in the eye, Jesus spoke sadly, compassionately: *''Simon, Simon! Satan, you must know, has got his wish to sift you all like wheat; but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail, and once you have recovered, you in your turn must strengthen your brothers'' (Lk 22:31-32).*

It was just like Simon Peter to answer, *''Lord, I would be ready to go to prison with you, and to death.''*

Jesus replied, *''I tell you, Peter, by the time the cock crows today you will have denied three times that you know me'' (Lk 22:34).*

''Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house; if there were not, I should have told you. I am going now to prepare a place for you and after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you with me; so that where I am you may be too'' (Jn 14:1-3).

Then he went on to say what was in his heart for so long. He could do it now, only an hour from Gethsemane and not many more from Golgotha:

''You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me...

''If you ask for anything in my name, I will do it. If you love me you will keep my commandments. I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you

forever, that Spirit of truth...

"I will not leave you orphans...

"If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him.

"Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you..."

And Jesus went on talking to them for the last time in moving, comforting words — but behind it all was the shadow of a terrifying presentiment:

"A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you.

"If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too...

"I have told you all this so that your faith may not be shaken. They will expel you from the synagogues, and indeed the hour is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing a holy duty for God...

"It is for your own good that I am going because unless I go, the Advocate will not come for you; but if I go, I will send him to you."

Again, referring to his imminent death and resurrection:

"I tell you most solemnly, you will be weeping and wailing while the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful but your sorrow will turn to joy . . .

"I have told you all this so that you may find peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but be brave: I have conquered the world" (Jn 14-16 passim).

Time was running out, all Jesus could do for his disciples was to pray. And pray he did, talking directly to his Father in heaven that none of them be lost, that they be shielded from the evil one, that all be one in love, *"so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them" (Jn 17).*

Agony in Gethsemane

Jesus was human, his sadness proved it. The knowledge of what he was about to suffer seemed unbearable, *"My soul is sorrowful to the point of death. Wait here and keep awake with*

me'' (Mt 26:38).

Jesus feared pain and torture, and grieved over his loved ones, but the worst suffering came from his awareness of sin. It reached him from every side. He had done everything possible to save sinners without taking away their free will. He would suffer everything, even death — but all could not be saved. He was dying for them, emptying himself completely, but some of them could not be helped: they would be lost forever.

Jesus was prostrate with grief. His death would mean nothing to thousands, to millions *''Father,''* he groaned, *''if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine'' (Lk 22:42f.). ''In his anguish he prayed even more earnestly, and his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood'' (Lk 22:44).*

This was the time Jesus needed his friends. He went to them, but they were sleeping. They should have been praying as he was: the evil one was nearing. Jesus staggered back to them and again he *''found them sleeping for sheer grief'' (Lk 22:45).*

The Arrest

It was the night of Judas. A band of armed men sent by the chief priests and elders, led by Judas, came to arrest Jesus. The signal was a kiss: *''So he went straight up to Jesus and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi,' and kissed him'' (Mt 26:49-50).* Probably with tears in his eyes, the Saviour treated him gently, still calling him friend: *''My friend, do what you are here for.''*

Jesus was still concerned about his friends' welfare for he urged the arresting officers, *''Let these others go'' (Jn 18:8).*

''Then all the disciples deserted him and ran away'' (Jn 26:56); as Jesus had told them earlier, quoting the prophet Zechariah *(13:7), ''I strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.''* He would have to face his enemies alone.

The Trial

Enough is recorded about the trial to know that it was a frame-up, the result of a definite plot to kill Jesus. According to both Jewish and Roman law, the accused had certain sub-

stantial rights and guarantees. In the case of Jesus, his civil rights were violated by cunning and scheming. The Lord's enemies hated him and wanted him dead.

Right from the beginning, his arrest was illegal. The Mosaic Law, the legal code of the Jews, forbade the use of spies and informers *(Lv 19:16ff.)*.

Annas seems to have been the chief plotter. It was he who advised, *"It is better for one man to die for the people" (Jn 18:14)*. He was not the high priest that year, only his father-in-law, but Jesus was first brought to him *(Jn 18:13-14)*.

"The chief priest and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus, however false, on which they might pass the death-sentence. But they could not find any, though several lying witnesses came forward" (Mt 26:59). The verdict was decided beforehand, anyway.

Finally, the high priest asked Jesus, *"Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"* In this, the greatest travesty of justice since the world began, the high priest was still piously adhering to the legality of not pronouncing God's name directly. *"'I am,' said Jesus 'and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.' The high priest tore his robes, 'What need of witnesses have we now?' he said. 'You heard the blasphemy. What is your finding?' And they all gave their verdict: he deserved to die.*

"Some of them started spitting at him and, blindfolding him, began hitting him with their fists and shouting, 'Play the prophet!' And the attendants rained blows on him" (Mk 14:16-65).

Peter's Denials

Peter followed the crowd from a distance. When all went in, he too went into the courtyard *"to see what the end would be" (Mt 26:58)*.

During the night, Peter's nerve gave way twice when mere servant-girls accused him of knowing Jesus. Twice he denied it. In the early dawn, one of the bystanders accused him again. Peter swore his denial for the third time. At that moment, the cock crowed and the Lord turned and looked at Peter. His look reminded Peter of what Jesus had told him, *"And he went out-*

side and wept bitterly'' (Mk 22:62).

Before Pilate

Ultimately, the material and legal responsibility of the trial rested upon the Roman magistrate, Pilate. His interrogation had no bearing on the essential point and no sentence was pronounced. Pilate could have legally charged Jesus with public disorder or, at most, with subversive action. His compliance with the will of the Jewish authorities — who had no right to condemn anyone to death — was an act of cowardly political expediency dictated by fear: his record with the central authority in Rome would suffer.

Because his wife sent him a message begging him not to do anything with Jesus, Pilate made some half-hearted attempts to spare him. Sensing an incipient riot, Pilate abdicated his responsibility: *''So he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd and said, 'I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your concern.' And the people, to a man, shouted back, 'His blood be on us and on our children!' Then he released Barabbas for them. He ordered Jesus to be first scourged and then handed over to be crucified.*

''The governor's soldiers took Jesus with them into the Praetorium and collected the whole cohort round him. Then they stripped him and made him wear a scarlet cloak, and having twisted some thorns into a crown they put this on his head and placed a reed in his right hand. To make fun of him they knelt to him saying, 'Hail king of the Jews!' And they spat on him and took the reed and struck him on the head with it'' (Mt 27:24-30).

It happened as the prophet Isaiah had foretold of the Messiah: *''For my part, I made no resistance, neither did I turn away. I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard; I did not cover my face against insult and spittle'' (50:5-6).*

The Crucifixion

Had Jesus been an impostor, had he not been the promised Saviour, there is no way he could have fulfilled the prophecies

about his sufferings and death. So many of their details were entirely dependent upon the actions of other people. This was the day the Lord had made, the day when so many prophecies came true.

"When they had reached a place called Golgotha, that is, the place of the skull, they gave him wine to drink with gall, which he tasted but refused to drink" (Mt 27:34), thus fulfilling the prophecies: *"In my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink" (Ps 69:22);* and *"Procure strong drink for a man about to perish, wine for the heart that is full of bitterness" (Pr 31:16).* When they had finished crucifying him, they shared out his clothing by casting lots, fulfilling the prophecy, *"They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothes" (Ps 22:18).* Then they sat down and kept watch over him.

"Above his head was placed the charge against him; it read: 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.' At the same time two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left" (Mt 27:37,38), fulfilling the prophecy, *". . . surrendering himself to death and letting himself be taken for a sinner" (Is 53:13).*

From here on, Gospels and Prophecies are so much alike that one or the other can serve to describe the awesome events of that afternoon:

The Actual Events

"The passers-by jeered at him; they shook their heads and said, 'So you would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days! Then save yourself! If you are God's son, come down from the cross!' The chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him in the same way. 'He saved others' they said, 'he cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He puts his trust in God; now let God rescue him if he wants him. For he did say, 'I am the son of God!'" (Mt 27:39-44).

The Prophecies

"All who pass your way, clap their hands at the sight; they whistle and shake their heads . . ." (Lm 2:15) ". . . and boasts

of having God for his father. Let us see if what he says is true . . . If the virtuous man is God's son, God will take his part and rescue him from the clutches of his enemies'' (Ws 2:16-18).

''Yet here am I, now more worm than man, scorn of mankind, jest of the people, all who see me jeer at me, they toss their heads and sneer, 'He relied on Yahweh, let Yahweh save him! If Yahweh is his friend, let Him rescue him'' (Ps 22:6-8).

''From the sixth hour (high noon) there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour (3:00 P.M.) And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabac-thani?' that is, My God, my God, why have you deserted me? (Cf.Ps 22:1: ''My God, my God, why have you deserted me?'')

''When some of those who stood there heard this, they said, 'The man is calling Elijah,' and one of them quickly ran to get a sponge which he dipped in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink. (cf. Ps 69:21: ''When I was thirsty they gave me vinegar to drink'').

'''Wait!' said the rest of them 'and see if Elijah will come to save him.' But Jesus, again crying out in loud voice, yielded up his spirit (cf. Is 53:8: ''Yes, he was torn away from the land of the living; for our faults struck down in death'').

''At that, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top & bottom; the earth quaked; the rocks were split'' (Mt 27:33-51).

To prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross during the Sabbath, on request of the Jews, Pilate ordered that the prisoners' legs be broken to hasten death: *''Consequently the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with him and then of the other. When they came to Jesus, they found he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance'' (cf. Ps 34:20: ''. . . taking care of every bone, Yahweh will not let one be broken.'' Is 53:5: ''Yet he was pierced through for our faults.'' Zc 12:10: ''They will look on the one whom they have pierced''); and immediately there came out blood and water'' (Jn 19:32-34).*

Jesus Redeemed All of Us

Jesus died as man, redeemed us as God. What Adam had lost, Jesus restored: *''As by one man's disobedience many were made*

sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous'' (Rm 5:19); ''He has overridden the Law, and cancelled every record of the debt that we had to pay; he has done away with it by nailing it to the cross'' (Col 2:14).

Christ suffered and died for all men, not just for those who would cooperate with his grace and be saved: *''There is only one mediator between God and mankind, himself a man, Christ Jesus, who sacrificed himself as ransom for them all'' (1 Tm 2:5-56).*

Though he died for all, Jesus does not force anyone to accept eternal life. He gave man free will and he will never take it away. Man can indeed reject his grace of redemption, as is obvious from St. Paul's words, *''The appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God'' (2 Co 5:20).* Hence, reconciliation with God still depends on each person and is still necessary for each person's salvation. God, however, saves those who are willing: *''Return to me, and I will return to you, says Yahweh Sabaoth'' (Zc 1:3).*

It is up to us to cooperate with God's grace, but Jesus made it all possible. Without his death, none of us could ever gain heaven. His death offers us that possibility because he atoned for Adam's sin, for the sins of us all: *''He was bearing our faults in his own body on the cross, so that we might die to our faults and live for holiness; through his wounds you have been healed'' (1 P 2:24); ''Remember, the ransom that was paid to free you from the useless way of life your ancestors handed down was not paid in anything corruptible, neither in silver nor gold, but in the precious blood of a lamb without spot or stain, namely Christ'' (1 P 1:18-19); ''He loves us and has washed away our sins with his blood'' (Rv 1:5).*

Christ's Love as Atonement

The atonement was adequate, equal to the offense. Man's sins offended God, a divine, infinite Being, so the offense was infinite (the offense is measured by the status of the offended person, e.g., if I kill a king, my offense is regicide, not just homicide). After his offense, man alone could never have bridged the infinite gulf between God and him. Christ's reparation was infinite because all actions are attributed to the person

doing them and, in this case, the Person who died, though only in his human nature, was the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity.

This seems perfectly logical to us humans, but it does not take into consideration God's love for us. God's unrelenting justice, our understanding of it notwithstanding, did not demand the sacrificial death of his own Son. The atonement, the debt, the ransom could have been paid by any act of Jesus, a mere act of his will, for example, or just lifting his finger. The Scriptures never regard the cross as part of a mechanism of injured divine right. On the contrary, the Bible stresses the reverse: that the cross is an expression of a love beyond reckoning, total love. In the Lord's own words, *"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you" (Jn 15:9),* that is, with an infinite love. *"A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends . . ." (Jn 15:12-13).* Each of us can rightly apply those words to himself.

The pain, the torture and death of Jesus, willingly suffered, prove his all-consuming love for us. They also give us an idea of the malice of sin. *"What proves that God loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners" (Rm 5:8).*

The Right to Heaven Restored

Our greatest loss through Adam's sin and our own was that of the gift of heaven, but God *"has taken us out of the power of darkness and created a place for us in the kingdom of the Son that he loves . . ." (Col 1:13).* In the perfect bliss of heaven are included the other gifts that Adam lost and Christ regained. Death will be no more. Even bodily death was conquered by Christ's death *(cf. 1 Co 15:54-57)* and our bodies, like his, will rise again, never to die *(cf. Rv 20:12, 14).* If we are faithful and keep his commandments, we will never have to suffer anymore: no pain or sickness of any kind, no sorrow, no weeping, no parting from our loved ones ever again, only requited, total love and bliss.

"I saw the holy city, and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven . . . Here God lives among men. He will make his home among them; they shall be his people, and he will

be their God; his name is God-with-them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no more death, and no more mourning or sadness. The world of the past has gone" (Rv 21:14-4).

Christ-Pantocrator

Eastern religious art often pictures Christ in power. Byzantine icons love to present him as the Pantocrator, the all-powerful Emperor and Judge, with stern, severe features. With his right hand raised in blessing or holding the Book of Judgment, he is forever the Heavenly Ruler. In many Byzantine churches, the Pantocrator may be seen in the dome over the sanctuary, staring down upon the attendance with all-seeing eyes.

Ukrainians, Russians and other Eastern Rite Slavs received Christianity from Byzantium — and together with it, the Pantocrator. To these newly-baptized peoples, his power and judgment seemed formidable, almost terrifying. Only later did they find out other aspects of Jesus' true personality.

The "Kenotic" Christ

As the Slavs began to know Christ better, they discovered him to mean love, charity, compassion — sharing a crust of bread with the hungry, a glass of cool water with the thirsty. His eyes were all-seeing, not only as a stern judge, but that he might notice and remember the smallest good deed performed in his name. He meant patient suffering and humiliation, being crucified for all people — not only for the high and mighty, but also for the despised little ones. He understood and loved each of them because they too were poor, and oppressed. He understood, because he himself had suffered the same indignities, and worse. He was one of them!

Above all, Christ meant gentleness and loving kindness in a land where among the rulers gentleness and kindness were unknown.

Dostoevsky, the great Russian writer, who knew the soul of his people better perhaps than any other, expresses this best:

"I affirm that our people were enlightened a long time ago, by accepting Christ and his teaching. The people know every-

thing . . . They learned in the churches where during the centuries, they heard prayers and songs that are better than sermons . . . Their chief school of Christianity was the ages of endless suffering endured in the course of history when abandoned by all, oppressed by all, working for all, they remained all alone with Christ the Comforter, whom they received then in their soul and who saved them from despair.''

The ideal of the loving, the meek and humiliated Christ who *''emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave'' (Ph 2:7)* appears in the earliest Slavonic religious writings. This was their ''kenotic'' (''self-emptying'') Christ. And this ideal very soon reflected itself in Slav icons. They replaced the image of the Pantocrator with that of the Saviour — also holding a book but, instead of a Book of Judgment, it was John's Gospel opened to the page, *''I give you a new commandment: love one another.''*

This ideal of the suffering, loving Christ, however, was not a projection of sentimentality and sweetness: he still is the legislator, but holding up a new commandment, *Love one another (Jn 13:34).* He is austere, not stern, because he is suffering; he is sad because not all keep his commandment.

The Jesus Prayer

Eastern Slavs have admirably combined the ideal of the suffering Christ with a prayer that is at once simple and rich in charismatic nuances. It is part of their Byzantine heritage and is known as the *Jesus Prayer:* ''Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have pity on me, a sinner.'' That is all! But it is repeated over and over again.

It combines two Gospel prayers by modifying them: the pleas of the blind beggar Jericho, *''Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me'' (Mk 10:48);* and the humble request of the publican, *''God, be merciful to me, a sinner'' (Lk 18:13).*

The word *Lord* confesses Christ's lordship (Pantocrator) over all. The words *Jesus Christ* are an expression of belief in the Lord as Saviour (Jesus) and as Messiah (Christ), the anointed one, who is priest and prince. An explicit confession of faith in his divinity is contained in the expression *Son of God.*

The original expressions *have pity* or *have mercy* (the Greek

eleison and the Slavonic *pomyluj)* contain elements of both healing and love in their root forms hence they petition Jesus not only for salvation from God's wrath or for healing: they also beg for his love. In English perhaps a truer way to bring out the original content would be to say: "in your compassion heal me, love me, even though I am a sinner!" And that is what Jesus did when he walked on earth as a man, and that is what he is doing now as God.

CHAPTER XII

The Resurrection of Jesus

Modern people are not the only ones who find it hard to believe that Jesus rose from the dead. Almost from the beginning, the Greeks had their doubts. Paul wrote to the Corinthians to convince them of the fact by saying that Christ died, was buried, and arose on the third day; that he appeared to many: to Peter, to the Twelve, to more than five hundred at the same time, most of whom were still alive; to James and then to all the apostles. Finally, he appeared to him, Paul.

The apostle rebukes unbelievers by asking, *"How can some of you be saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ himself cannot have been raised, and if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is useless and your believing it is useless; indeed, we are shown up as witnesses who have committed perjury before God, because we swore in evidence before God that he had raised Christ to life" (1 Co 15:12-17).*

Jesus Foretold His Resurrection

Christ had foretold his resurrection from the dead offering it as proof of all his claims. This was no vague assertion, subject to uncertain interpretation. He clearly, repeatedly mentioned it. After Peter's confession of Christ's divinity at Caesarea Philippi, *"From that time, Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day" (Mt 16:21).*

On coming down from the mountain after the Transfiguration, Jesus charged the three apostles, *"Tell no one about the vision until the Son of Man has risen from the dead" (Mt 17:9, cf. Mk 9:8).*

Even before that, when the scribes and Pharisees had asked him for a sign to prove his claims, Jesus replied that the only sign they would get would be *"the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was in the belly of the sea-monster for three days*

and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights'' (Mt 12:28:40).

On the way to Gethsemane after the Last Supper, Jesus told the apostles, *''You will all lose faith . . . however, after my resurrection I shall go before you to Galilee'' (Mk 14:27-28).*

These predictions were no secret. Christ's enemies understood them well, for after he died, the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate and told him, *''Your Excellency, we recall that this impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I shall rise again.' Therefore give the order to have the sepulchre kept secure until the third day, for fear his disciples come and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' This last piece of fraud would be worse than what went before'' (Mt 27:62-64).*

Jesus Really Died

Some unbelievers, in order to explain away the resurrection, claim that Jesus did not really die on the cross, that he merely lost consciousness, and that later the sharp odor of the burial spices or drugs revived him.

Somehow unbelievers do not give enough credit to Christ's enemies. After going to all the trouble of plotting his death, forcing his sentence, and watching him suffer on the cross, they surely would have made certain of his death, especially since they knew he predicted his resurrection. They wanted him dead; nothing was to cheat them of that.

There were dramatic signs as Jesus died: darkness over the earth, the earth quaking and rocks splitting, signs so moving that *''the centurion, together with the others guarding Jesus . . . said, 'In truth this was a son of God . . .''' (Mt 27:54).* Mark put it this way, *''The centurion, who was standing in front of him, had seen how he had died, and he said, 'In truth this man was a son of God''' (Mk 15:39).* There were others who saw him die, and because of all that happened at his death, *''they went home beating their breasts'' (Lk 23:48).*

If Christ's enemies had not been sure of his death, they would not have allowed his body to be removed from the cross. Furthermore, if Jesus had not really died, they would not have had to

invent the fable of a stolen corpse.

The officers in charge of the execution officially reported to Pilate that Jesus was dead indeed: *"Pilate, astonished that he should have died so soon, summoned the centurion and enquired if he was already dead. Having been assured of this by the centurion, he granted the corpse to Joseph" (Mk 15:44-45).*

The officer in charge knew well that Jesus was dead. As requested by the Jews, Pilate had given orders that the crucified were to have their legs broken — in order to speed their death, so that the bodies would not remain on the crosses after sunset (when the Sabbath began). The centurion supervised the breaking of the legs of the other two, but *"when they came to Jesus, they found he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water" (Jn 19:33-34).* This *coup de grace* alone excluded any possible doubt about his death. The wound was large enough for Thomas to put his hand in.

Christ's friends, too, knew that he was really dead. Had there been any doubt, they would not have entombed him. But they did: they wrapped his body in tight cloths, as was customary, and embalmed it with about a hundred pounds of aromatic spices.

That Christ's followers were thoroughly convinced is also evident from their difficulty in believing that he had risen. Thomas was not the only one to have doubted.

Theories "Explaining Away" the Resurrection

Most theories proposed by unbelievers to explain away the facts of the resurrection demand more credulity than does belief in it.

Some state that the apostles and their friends deceived the world about the resurrection. Others insist that Christ's friends or the Jewish leaders themselves stole his body from the tomb. Some declare that Pilate authorized its removal without Christ's followers knowing about it. Others again hold that the body fell into a crevice during the earthquake.

Perhaps most admit that the apostles were sincerely convinced of Christ's resurrection, but claim that they saw only a

vision of him or were victims of hallucinations, mostly effected by an intense desire to believe in it. Some give more of a spiritual twist to the events: they say the followers of Christ saw the Lord, not in the flesh but in the spirit, or that direct divine action had stimulated their senses subjectively.

Some rationalists advance an even more complicated theory: that Christ had never come back to life, that faith in his resurrection had grown progressively, and that the Gospels expressed the beliefs current at the time of their composition.

Jesus Really Rose from the Dead

Christ's enemies were told by their own soldiers about the events surrounding his resurrection: they had felt the earth quake, there had been a blinding light, they had seen a being *"whose face was like lightning,"* rolling away the stone; they had become *"so shaken, so frightened of him, that they were like dead men" (Mt 28:2-5).* After regaining their composure, they must have checked the tomb before reporting anything, otherwise they would not have known Jesus was no longer there.

Even the chief priests believed the frightened soldiers when told by them what had happened, for they bribed them with *"a considerable sum of money" (Mt 28:12),* telling them to spread the lie that *"his disciples came during the night, and stole him away while they were asleep" (Mt 28:13).*

If there had been any doubt about the reality of the events, why would the high priests have offered to put things right with the governor in case the soliders got in trouble with him *(Mt 28:14)?* Clearly, they were all convinced that Jesus had risen from the dead.

The fabricated tale of the body-theft is ridiculous: if the soldiers had been asleep, how could they have *seen* Christ's disciples stealing the body? Christ' enemies should have come up with a better story!

The apostles and other friends were too frightened and despondent to dare attempt such an abduction — and, had they tried, could not have succeeded. How could they have broken the official seal and rolled back the huge stone without making enough noise to rouse the guards? How could they have carried

away the body and hidden it so perfectly that no one ever discovered it? If Christ's enemies had stolen it, they would certainly have produced it to counter the claims of the disciples. And what motive would Christ's followers have had to steal it? If Christ had not risen, he had deceived them, he had been an impostor. Many of them were later killed for Christ and his teachings. They would not have given up their lives had they not believed in his resurrection.

The claim that Christ's body fell into a crevice during an earthquake makes no sense: the long winding sheet lay *on the ground* in one place and the head cloth in another: *''This was not with the linen clothes but rolled up in a place by itself' (Jn 20:7).* A strange earthquake indeed that would have peeled the burial sheets off a body, put them in two different places, and *rolled one of them up!*

The Resurrection Was a Fact

Theories of self-delusion or hallucination on the part of Christ's followers are no better. The illusion, we are told, grew chiefly out of an intense belief and an all-consuming trust that their beloved Master would arise.

Self-delusion or hallucination may sometimes be brought about by intense belief and trust, but there was none here. The fact is that Christ's followers did not expect him to rise from the dead, even though he had told them he would. They were despondent precisely because they did not believe the prediction. Even after the women had told the disciples the tomb was empty, they found it hard to believe. *''But this story of theirs seemed pure nonsense, and they did not believe them'' (Lk 24:11).* There is here no ''all-consuming trust'' or ''intense belief,'' but the very opposite. John and Peter ran to the tomb to see for themselves. Only after they had entered the tomb and seen the burial cloths did they believe. *''Till this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture, that he must rise from the dead'' (Jn 20:9).*

When the risen Lord came for the first time to the Apostles, while Thomas was absent, *''He reproached them for their incredulity and obstinacy, because they had refused to believe*

those who had seen him after he had risen'' (Mk 16:14). Again, hardly ''an all-consuming confidence!'' Even as Christ stood among them, they still doubted: *''They thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.' And as he said this he showed them his hands and feet.''* To convince them completely that he was not a ghost or a vision, he asked them for something to eat, *''and they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes'' (Lk 24:37ff.).*

Then, there was Thomas. After the eleven had told him they had seen the Lord, was he ''all-consumed'' with belief? Not in the least.

''Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe'' (Jn 20:25).

Jesus came again and insisted, *''Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe'' (Jn 20:25).* Only then was he convinced — hardly a vision induced by ''intense belief and trust!'' Nor was it self-delusion or ''pictures presented to the imagination;'' these cannot be felt and touched. What they had seen was Christ himself, a living man!

If the disciples saw Christ, it is not because of their faith in him. The opposite is true: they believed in him because they had seen him with their own eyes, touched him with their own hands, conversed with him, and given him food to eat.

Objection Based on Paul

Rationalists also claim that Paul at the time he wrote his First Letter to the Corinthians (chapter 15) knew nothing about an empty tomb, nor did any of the other apostles. This is pure fiction.

Paul knew about the empty tomb; he was a friend of St. Luke who wrote about it in his Gospel. Paul himself expressed his conviction in the same letter to the Corinthians, stating unequivocally, *''that Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the*

scriptures; that he was buried; and that he was raised to life on the third day'' (1 Co 15:2). Why mention the empty tomb? How could Christ rise on the third day without leaving behind an empty tomb?

Paul bases his whole argument about Jesus being the Messiah on the fact that Jesus did not experience bodily corruption as did David (and consequently did not remain in a tomb as did David): *''The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to return to corruption, is no more than what he had declared: 'To you I shall give the sure and holy things promised to David.' This is explained by another text: 'You will not allow your holy one to experience corruption.' Now when David in his own time had served God's purposes he died; he was buried with his ancestors and has certainly experienced corruption. The one whom God has raised up, however, has not experienced corruption'' (Ac 13:34-37).* This alone proves Paul knew and believed Christ had risen from the dead.

To say that Peter and the other apostles did not at first know about the empty tomb does not square with historical facts. Peter spoke about the risen Christ on that first Pentecost to a huge crowd in Jerusalem, testifying in presence of the other apostles: *''Listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you imagine; why it is only the third hour of the day . . .''* and *''Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God by the miracles and portents and signs that God worked through him when he was among you, as you all know. This man . . . you took and had crucified by men outside the Law. You killed him, but God raised him to life . . . God raised this man Jesus to life, and all of us are witnesses to that'' (Ac 2:15, 22-24-32).*

On that day, three thousand people believed and were baptized *(Ac. 2:41).*

A little later Peter and John were again preaching *''the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead by proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus . . . many of those who had listened to their message became believers, the total number of whom had now risen to something like five thousand'' (Ac 4:2-4).* In fact, it was not long afterwards that *''a large group of priests made their*

submission to the faith'' (Ac 6:7).

If in A.D. 57, when Paul wrote his First Letter to the Corinthians, the fact of the empty tomb was still unknown as the rationalists claim, how was it that from the beginning there existed at Jerusalem a Christian community openly professing the resurrection? It is much easier to believe in the simple fact that Jesus rose from the dead than in the elaborate objections.

CHAPTER XIII

Christ's Death and Resurrection Commemorated

Jesus died, Jesus rose: the redemption and resurrection are central to the Christian faith. Belief in these events is expressed in many ways, but none more vivid than the ritual poetry of the Byzantine liturgy.

The Easter Preparations

The Easter preparations, both physical and spiritual, are long and arduous. Even before Lent begins, the readings at Sunday Liturgies urge repentance, penitence, and spiritual renewal. God's wrath is tempered by his mercy: Christ is the severe Judge, but he is also kind, compassionate, eager to embrace the repentant prodigal.

Great Lent lasts forty days (not counting Saturdays and Sundays). Some faithful still keep the strict discipline of the ancient tradition: no meat products from Meat Fare Sunday (a week and a day before Lent) and no dairy products and eggs from Cheese Fare Sunday (a day before Lent) until Easter. Most people, however, follow the relaxed regulations of their diocese.

Throughout Lent, instead of bowing to the Eucharistic Christ on entering and leaving the church, the faithful prostrate themselves three times, sometimes even kissing the floor. The whole congregation does this also after every service, while singing: *"Christ Jesus, having suffered the passion for us, have mercy on us."*

Midway through Lent, a special penitential service is held, with two hundred and sixty-five prostrations. Concessions are often made to human frailty by reducing the prostrations to a hundred or even to a mere sixty-five! The highlight of the service is the "Kanon" of St. Andrew of Crete, an exquisite poetic composition which uses abundant biblical imagery regarding man's sinfulness and need of repentance.

Holy Week in the Byzantine Tradition

The observances of Holy Week are rigorous. During its first three days, the Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts is celebrated; its Gospel readings are lengthy, reviewing the whole life of Christ on earth.

HOLY THURSDAY On Holy Thursday, Solemn Vespers is combined with the Eucharistic Liturgy of St. Basil the Great — an arrangement reaching back to the early centuries of the Church when the Eucharistic Liturgy was not necessarily preceded by the Liturgy of the Catechumens, but by some other service.

In the evening a special "Service of the Lord's Sufferings" is held. Its twelve Gospel readings (symbolic of the twelve hours of Christ's sleepless night) recall his passion and death in detail, beginning with the Lord's farewell discourse at the Last Supper and ending with his burial. A bell is rung once after the first Gospel, twice after the second, and so on, to proclaim the significance of Christ's ever increasing pain. The bell is struck twelve times after the last Gospel, climaxing the service. After this, no bells are rung until Easter morning, a wooden clapper is used instead. The silence of bells mutely testifies to profound sorrow, sorrow for sin, and anguish felt for the Saviour who died to atone for sin. Before and after each Gospel, all make prostrations to the ground.

HOLY FRIDAY: The highlight of Holy Friday is Solemn Vespers and its symbolic funeral of the Lord. Weather permitting the burial procession with the holy shroud (a large, thick piece of elaborately painted cloth with the image of the entombed Christ) is made three times around the church.

At least four men carry the shroud and, as in an actual funeral, they are preceded by cross- and standard-bearers; acolytes, clergy, and many of the faithful follow. The singing is soul-stirring.

After the procession, the image is laid out on a sepulchre-replica for veneration. Candles, greens and spring flowers signifying the death of Jesus adorn this "tomb." The

faithful approach the shroud on their knees, make three prostrations, and kiss the five wounds of Christ. The "wake" lasts until Easter morning — many of the faithful watching and praying before the shroud throughout the two nights, as they used to do at the wakes of their loved ones.

HOLY SATURDAY: Holy Saturday Matins is especially mournful and long, with melodies reminiscent of Jewish lamentations. They call it "Matins Before the Tomb," or "Jerusalem Matins." The Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is celebrated, again combined with the Solemn Vespers. The faithful continue their vigil and in the evening another service "before the tomb" is celebrated.

EASTER SUNDAY: At dawn, bells peal: the joy is rapturous. Greeks, Arabs and Eastern Rite Slavs greet each other: "Christ is risen!" The response is a corresponding profession of faith: "He is truly risen!"

In the Byzantine Rite, the day is generally known as the "Resurrection," sometimes as the "Feast of Feasts," or in the Hebrew tradition, the *Paskha*. The joy of the *Paskha* spills over form the liturgical celebrations to life in the home.

The "Troparion of the Resurrection," "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling death by death, and bestowing life upon those in the tomb!" is sung by the faithful as they stand outside the main doors of the church where Easter Matins begins. They keep on repeating loudly the same verses, while Easter verses are sung by the priest-celebrant who represents the angel announcing the joyful news of the resurrection.

Each time the faithful burst into jubilant song, bells peal out. Before entering the church, the priest strikes the door with the hand-cross and it is opened from within. This action symbolizes the opening of heaven's gates by Christ's saving death and his rising from the dead.

Matins is continued inside the church with the same joyous rapture and glorious chant. The *Kanon* of Easter, attributed to St. John of Damascus, describes in poetic words and colorful allegories the meaning of the Feast of Feasts.

A typical verse:

"O Day of Resurrection! Let us be illumined,
O ye people! O Passover, the Passover, of the Lord!
From death to life, and from earth to heaven
hath Christ our God brought us,
singing a song of victory!
Christ is risen from the dead."

Matins moves on with further expressions of poetic delight, calling on all to love one another in the joy of the Lord:

"O Day of Resurrection!
Let us be illumined with this solemn Feast!
Let us embrace one another.
Let us call out: brothers!
As for those who hate us,
let us forgive all things
because of the Resurrection,
and thus exclaim:
Christ is risen from the dead,
trampling death by death,
and bestowing life upon those in the tomb!"

The final theme is sung over and over again during the kiss of peace, while people exchange the solemn greeting: "Christ is risen," "He is truly risen!" Then, one by one, the people approach to kiss the holy cross held by the main celebrant, the Gospel Book held by another priest or a deacon, and finally the holy icons held by still others, and all exchange greetings.

At the end of Matins, the priest elevates the cross three times, and forcefully proclaims three times, "Christ is risen!" All reply "He is truly risen!"

The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom follows. The Easter gospel *(Jn 1:1-17),* divided into twelve parts, is chanted in different languages to signify that Christ's redemption applies to all races and nations. Bells ring out between each part.

Towards the end of the Easter Liturgy, just after the "Prayer before the Ambo," the priest blesses the *artos* (the Greek word for bread). It is a round loaf, decorated with

a cross or with the image of Christ's resurrection. It symbolizes the Bread of Eternal Life. During all of Easter Week, it lies on the *tetrapod* (icon-altar) together with a resurrection-icon. At the end of the octave, the artos is broken into parts, reminiscent of the Eucharistic "bread-breaking" of apostolic days, and is distributed to all, either at the end of the Divine Liturgy or at an *agape* the common parish meal usually held on the Sunday after Easter. The *agape,* also traces its origin to the very first centuries of the Church.

The Blessing of Easter Food

Byzantine-Slav Christians place special importance on the blessing of Easter food which they bring to church in brightly colored baskets. Its central item is the *Paskha,* a round, richly decorated bread, representing Christ the Paschal Lamb of the New Law, the Living Bread, liberating all from the captivity of sin and allowing them to "pass over" to the promised land of heaven, as the ancient Hebrews passed over to freedom from the slavery of Egypt. The blessing of Easter food is often called the blessing of the *Paskha.*

The *Babka* (the word means "an elderly woman"), another round bread though not quite as elaborate as the *Paskha,* is put into the basket in honor of Mary, the Mother of God, who was intimately connected with her Son's suffering and death. Its rich, fine-textured glaze symbolizes her joy at his resurrection.

Dairy products such as butter and cheese, signify the spiritual wealth of the promised land, a land *"flowing with milk and honey" (Ex 3:8).*

The richness of God's mercy is seen in the fine sausages and bacon put into the basket. Ham and other meats represent the sacrificial animals of the Old Testament which foreshadowed the sacrificed Lamb of God in the New. Leviticus *(2:13)* prescribed that every oblation be salted. A small container of salt is added for this and other reasons. Salt is pure, preserves against corruption and gives flavor to food. After Jesus had proclaimed the Beatitudes, he told his followers that they must be the salt of the earth *(Mt 5:12).*

At every Jewish Passover Supper, bitter herbs, including horse-radish, were served with the paschal lamb to remind everyone at the table of the bitter sufferings of the Jews during their slavery in Egypt. These herbs were Old Testament prefigurations of the intense suffering and torments which Jesus, the Lamb of God, was to undergo in the New. Horse-radish is also put into the Easter basket. So is a bright red beet-sauce which stains everything it touches. This represents the stains of sin removed by the Lamb of God through his passion and death, in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: *"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as snow" (1:18).*

Then, of course, there are the traditional Easter eggs — but a world of difference in their decoration, coloring and meaning separates the Slavs from Western Christians.

An egg contains new life: Christ is new life to all. Before hatching, the egg appears dead: Christ really died before he came back to life. The new life contained in the egg comes forth when the chicken breaks out of the shell: Christ brought new life to everyone when he broke forth from the tomb. Cracking the Easter egg is the symbol of Christ's resurrection and its all-embracing meaning of new life.

Easter eggs with their symbolic message are exchanged with friends and family, as are greeting cards in the Western world. Each color speaks its own language: red signifies love; black, remembrance; blue, health; brown, happiness; yellow, spirituality; white, purity; green, wealth; and purple, high power.

Easter-egg painting is a specialized art form. The highly intricate, miniature designs sometimes requiring hours of patient work.

Each design, with dots, lines and crosses, is representative. Crosses have the usual meaning, the Saviour's redeeming sacrifice. Flowers and plants indicate bountiful, earthly gifts, beauty, happiness, love, etc. Ribbons and lines encircling the egg, having no beginning nor end, represent eternity. Ladder-like motifs signify prayers reaching heaven. Cross-hatched triangles symbolize the Holy Trinity. Dots represent the tears shed by the Mother of Jesus during her Son's agony and suffering. According to legend, before pleading for her Son's life with Pontius

Pilate, Mary decorated some eggs and offered them to him. As she was preparing them, tears fell on them, forming dots of brilliant colors.

After the Easter Liturgy, the Paschal celebration begins at the home, with everyone sharing the food that has been blessed. Relatives, friends, and even strangers, are welcomed with child-like joy, for the meal foreshadows the banquet at the Lord's table in the heavenly Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XIV

Mary, Mother of God

What was Mary like, this lady from whom the Son of God chose to take his flesh? Was she beautiful? Did she play like other children when she was a child? Was she tall, strong, raven—haired? We do not know, for such things are not recorded in the Scriptures.

The New Testament says very little about Mary, only giving the basic facts about her unique position as Mother of Jesus, the Son of God. The rest is left to the Church's living tradition which, through centuries of prayerful reflection, does offer deeper insights into the saving mysteries flowing from her divine maternity.

Everything said of Mary as the mother of Jesus leads back to him. That is the basis for true devotion to her and the reason why we should love her.

The Teotokos, Mother of God

When the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, came to earth, *''The Word was made flesh; he lived among us'' (Jn 1:14).* As in other Scriptural passages (e.g., Gn 6:12) the word ''flesh'' means the entire nature of man, a real body of living flesh and blood, with organs and bones, animated by a soul that thought, made decisions, felt sad, suffered and was separated from that body only by death.

Nor did the Son of God bring his body from heaven: he received it from a human mother! *''When the appointed time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman'' (Ga 4:4).*

When Mary consented to what the angel had asked of her *(Lk 1:38),* the Son of God through the intervention of the Holy Spirit *(Lk 1:35)* took on a human nature like ours, which never for an instant existed separately from his divinity. Being eternally begotten of God the Father, the Son of God did not have a human father and did not need any.

Since it was the Son of God Mary conceived and brought to life, she is truly his mother, that is, the *Theotokos* (God-

bearer,'' or ''Mother of God'').

Mary always featured prominently in any defense against false doctrines concerning her divine Son. When the Docetists and Gnostics in the first centuries denied his true humanity, the early Christian Creeds, in accordance with the Sciptures, insisted that the Son of God ''was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary'' (Apostles' Creed) or ''he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary and became man'' (Nicene Creed).

Later, when the Nestorians tried to minimize Mary's role by refusing to call her the Mother of God, the result was a clarification of Christ's divine Sonship: first at the Council of Ephesus in 431, then at Chalcedon in 451, finally at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553. What the Councils declared, the people had always believed, nourished as they were on the Scriptures and the teachings of some of the finest theologians that ever lived — Origen, Athanasius, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Cyril of Alexandria, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa. In fact, it was the ordinary people with their instinctive good sense who first rose up in indignation against the novel doctrine of Bishop Nestorius.

Since then, the Theotokos, the Mother of God, has remained the foundation of Eastern piety. In the West, the Greek word *''Theotokos,* was translated into the Latin *''Deipara,''* without ever reaching the popularity it enjoys in the East, where it still remains the title given most often to Mary. The Greeks and Eastern Slavs seldom refer to her as Mary, Our Lady, or the Blessed Virgin, but almost invariably as the Mother of God. The Slavs translated Theotokos as *Bogoroditsja,* literally the ''Birthgiver of God,'' emphasizing thereby the parenting, the birth-giving. Again, this means that they regard Mary, not as generating or causing the divinity, but as giving birth to Christ who is at one and the same time man and God.

Always a Virgin, Aeiparthenos

Jesus had no human father. Mary did not understand the angel when he told her she would conceive and bear a son:

"But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered: *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God" (Lk 1:32-35).*

Joseph to whom she was engaged was puzzled too when he saw she was with child. Convinced of her virtue and being a good man himself, he did not wish to expose her to the rigor of the Law (Dt 22:20f.), so he decided to put her away informally: *"He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins'" (Mt 1:20-21).*

St. Matthew goes on to explain what God foretold through Isaiah *(7:14): "This took place to fulfill the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means "God-is-with-us". When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home and though he had not had intercourse with her, she gave birth to a son; and he named him Jesus" (Mt 1:22-25).*

The early Christians believed not only this, but they were convinced that Mary remained a virgin even after the birth of Jesus. This is reflected in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Chrysostom, Athanasius, Epiphanius and others. St. Jerome (c. 380) was especially vehement in defending Mary's perpetual virginity against the contrary opinion of Helvidius, branding the latter's teaching as an insult to the Mother of God, to Jesus and to the Holy Spirit. The Council of Ephesus in 431 clearly concurred in that belief. So did all the Christians until the rise of Protestantism in the sixteenth century.

"Brothers and Sisters" of Jesus

The doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity is in no way contradicted by the Scriptures which speak of the brothers

and sisters of Jesus *(Mk 3:31)*. The original Greek expression merely translates the Aramaic *ach* which includes varying degrees of consanguinity such as half-brother, nephew, or cousin.

There are many instances in the Scriptures where the word "brother" is used in the broad sense to indicate nephew or cousin. Lot, for example, in Genesis *(14:14)* is called "brother" of his uncle, Laban *(Ga 29:15);* the sons of Cis (Kish) as "the brethren" of their cousins, the daughters of Eleazar *(1 Ch 23:21-22)*, etc. Neither the Hebrew nor the Aramaic had any special term to signify "cousin": they either had to resort to "brother" or to clumsy circumlocutions, "son of (paternal) uncle" or "son of the brother of the mother."

Christ the "Firstborn"

Things are not the same today as they were two thousand years ago. Circumstances change, expressions take on different meanings with the centuries. A good example is Luke's *(2:7)* expression "firstborn" of Mary in referring to Jesus. Today it would imply other children, but thousands of years ago it did not.

Luke uses the Greek word *prototokos* which is the equivalent of the Hebrew *b'kor,* a term always used in an absolute sense for "that which openeth the womb" *(cf. Ex. 13:2, Nb 3:12, etc.)* without implying any later birth. The first male child was always called "firstborn." The word merely indicates, even if no other children were born to the same mother, the fact that there were no male children before that one. Modern archaeological discoveries confirm this. A two-thousands-year old Greek stele, for example, discovered in 1922 at Tell el Yaheoudieh, Egypt, states that a woman, Arsinoe, died in bringing her "firstborn" into the world; obviously, she could not have given birth to any other children.

Older translations of the Bible say of Mary that Joseph *"knew her not till she brought forth her firstborn" (Mt 1:25)*. The Greek *eos,* "till," and the Semitic word represented by it, merely deny the action for the periods of time preceeding the verb "brought forth," again without any implication as to the

future.

The Scriptural use of "till" can be seen clearly in many other passages. St. Paul *(1 Tm 4:13),* for example, exhorts Timothy to attend to the reading, exhortation, and doctrines "till" he comes, without implying that Timothy can neglect these things in the future after Paul's visit. In II Samuel *(6:23),* Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child "till" the day of her death. Still another passage, I Maccabees *(5:54)* speaks of the Maccabees offering holocausts *"because not one of them was slain till they had returned in peace."* This does not imply that one of them was slain after their return. There are other examples *(e.g., Gn 8:7, Dt 34:6, etc.).*

Mary Panhagia, "The All-holy One"

In writing about the annunciation, St. Luke gives both the fact and the reason for Mary's holiness: her being destined to become mother of God's Son. The angel addresses her as *"full of grace" (Lk 1:28).* Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, called out to her, *"Of all women you are the most blessed" (Lk 1:42).*

Holiness consists in being open to God's will and cooperating with it. Mary is the supreme example of *synergy,* the cooperation between God's will and human freedom. Forever respecting the free will of his human creatures, God became incarnate through the free consent of the person he chose to be his mother. Mary could have refused, but she did not. Her compliance is evident in her answer, *"I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me" (Lk 1:38).*

Origen was the first to call her *panhagia,* the "all-holy one," and others were soon to follow.

Mary Akhrantos, "The Immaculate One"

Centuries before 1854, when Pope Pius IX solemnly defined the Immaculate Conception of Mary as a truth of faith, the Byzantine world believed it and praised Mary as the *akhrantos,* "the immaculate, spotless one."

On the feast of her conception by St. Anne (Dec. 9th in the Byzantine Church), her immaculateness is especially stressed:

"This day, O faithful, from saintly parents begins to take being the spotless lamb, the most pure tabernacle, Mary...." (Matins, 3rd Ode of *Kanon);* "She is conceived...the only immaculate one" (Matins, Stanzas during Seating); "Having conceived the most pure dove, Anne filled with heavenly joy sings hymns of thanksgiving unto God" (Matins, 6th Ode of *Kanon).*

No sin, no fault, not even the slightest, ever marred the perfect sanctity of this masterpiece of God's creation. The singing of the *Megalynarion* during the Eucharistic Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom has been an established practice since the turn of the sixth century; its words express what Byzantine Christians believed then and still do now:

> "It is indeed fitting to glorify you, Birthgiver of God, ever-blessed and completely sinless one, Mother of our God. We extol you, since you are higher in honor than the cherubim and incomparably more glorious than the seraphim in being God's Mother by giving birth to the Word of God without violating your virginity."

Mary the New Eve

Because Mary shared Christ's redemptive work in a very real way, the early writers and Fathers of the Church regarded her as the new Eve. Its is perhaps her oldest title, reaching back to apostolic times.

St. Justin Martyr, who studied in Asia Minor, wrote (c. 135) that Christ was born of the Virgin "in order that the disobedience caused by the serpent might be destroyed in the same way in which it had orginated. For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, conceived the word of the serpent, and brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced to her the good tidings that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her and the power of the Most High would overshadow her, and therefore the Holy One born of her is the Son of God and she replied: 'Be it done unto me according to thy word' (Dialogue with Trypho," chap. 100). And Irenaeus, a student of St. Polycarp in Smyrna: "So the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed through the

obedience of Mary, for what Eve, a virgin, had bound through her unbelief, Mary, a virgin, unloosed through her faith'' (''Against the Heresies,'' III, ww, 4). St. Jerome puts it more succinctly: ''Death by Eve, life by Mary'' (''Letter'' 22, 21).

The Dormition of the Mother of God

The East was the cradle of Christianity; it originated devotion to Mary. After the institution of a feast dedicated simply to the Mother of God, another was established in the fifth century to commemorate her *Koimesis* or Dormition. Literally meaning ''The Falling Asleep of the Mother of God,'' it refers to her brief period of death. The Western Church prefers to call it her Assumption into heaven.

The Tropar(ion) of the feast (August 15th) for the Eucharistic Liturgy clearly expresses many of Mary's prerogatives, including her assumption into heaven:

> ''In thy maternity, thou didst retain thy virginity, and even though thou hadst ascended to heaven, thou didst not forsake the world: O Mother of God, thou hast passed to Life, since thou art the Mother of Life: through thine intercession, save our souls from death!''

Devotion to the Mother of God

Byzantine Christians cannot understand why anyone would want to ''de-emphasize'' devotion to Mary the Mother of God. Brought up on a liturgical tradition rich in doctrinal truth, they sense Mary's rightful place beside Jesus, her Saviour-Son. Knowing her share in giving God's Son to the world, their feeling for her is intuitive, the more you love and glorify Christ's mother, the more he is pleased — as you are when someone praises your own mother.

It is the people's liturgy and iconography that inspired them to the depths of intense devotion they have for the Mother of God; theologians had little to do with it.

The Mother is God in the Liturgy

The Eastern Church calendar has a Marian feast for every day of the year, celebrating either incidents in her life on earth, or the miracles attributed to her after her assumption. The Byzantine Church keeps reminding its faithful every day of Mary's intercession and help in all needs of life. Besides the many general hymns in Mary's honor, each of her feasts has its propers: tropar(ia)s, kontak(ia)s, and canticles — musical poems honoring her virtues, her titles, her intimate relationship with God and mankind.

According to some historians, the introduction of Mary's name and hymns into every liturgical office was one of the predominant concerns of the Byzantine liturgists.

In each Eucharistic Liturgy, Mary is greeted sixteen times — five times as "the all-holy, immaculate, most highly blessed, our glorious Lady, the Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary," her greatest titles.

The "Acathist Hymn" bursts with ecstatic exaltion of Mary. An intensely popular service with the people, it traces its beginnings to sixth-century Byzantium. As a collection of poetic invocations, its praise of the Mother of God is unrivaled. The Acathist, with its twenty-four chants, mirrors the entire story of Mary: as first prefigured in the Old Testament, then as related in the Gospel — from the Annunciation, through the Visitation, Nativity, and Purification — finally, after her Son's life on earth, Mary's own place as intercessor before her divine Son. A prominent feature of the Acathist is the crescendo of colorful metaphors, addressing the Mother of God and beginning with the word 'Rejoice." The first *Ikos* is a good example:

> "An angel was sent from heaven to say to the Mother of God: Rejoice! And seeing Thee, O Lord, become Incarnate, trembled as he stood before her; then he voiced his greetings:
> — Rejoice, O thou through whom joy will shine forth!

— Rejoice, O thou through whom the curse will be dissolved!
— Rejoice, O thou through whom freedom from Adam's fall is won!
— Rejoice, O thou who driest the tears of Eve!
— Rejoice, O thou, height surpassing man's comprehension!
— Rejoice, O thou, depth not fathomed even by angels!
— Rejoice, O thou who art a throne for the King!
— Rejoice, for thou bearest him who bears all creation!
— Rejoice, O Star causing the Sun to appear!
— Rejoice, O Womb in which God becomes man!
— Rejoice, O thou through whom all creatures find new life!
— Rejoice, O thou through whom we adore our Creator!
— Rejoice, O bride, yet ever Virgin!''

The office of ''Paraclisis'' or Office of Consolation (literally ''of calling upon'') in honor of Mary is another service to which the faithful are deeply attached. Used especially during the two weeks preceding Dormition, it is an exquisite preparation for that feast. It, too, is made up of odes, hymns and prayers to the Mother of God, and through it all is repeated the invocation: ''O most holy Mother of God, save us!'' Most Slavs know it in a shortened form as the ''Moleben to the Mother of God.''

The Mother of God in Icons

Reinforcing the liturgy's emphasis on the Mother of God are the numberless icons depicting Mary holding the Infant Jesus in her arms, as well as the many important events from her life (e.g., the icon of the Assumption in Kiev, the most ancient relic of Kievan iconography).

An icon of the Mother of God is always to the right of the Saviour's (the onlooker's left) on the iconostas(ion) of every oriental rite church and chapel.

Some icons are named after the locality where they were found, or where a miracle took place through Mary's intercession (e.g., Our Lady of Vladimir, of Kazan, of Kursk, etc.). Others bear the name of the special assistance rendered: Our Lady of Immediate Help, Our Lady the Prompt Listener, Our Lady of the Unexpected Joy, Our Lady the Consoler of My Grief, Our Lady Salvation of the Sinner, Our Lady Salvation of Those Drowned at Sea, etc.

Down through the centuries, Mary performed miracles in Greece, in Russia, in the Ukraine. Invariably, her miracles are associated with her icons and the churches enshrining them. These are places of pilgrimage as are Lourdes, Fatima and LaSalette in the Latin Church.

In Greece, the most famous is the miraculous icon of *Panhagia Evangelistria* on the island of Tinos at the shrine of the Annunciation. Attracting thousands each year, it has been called the Lourdes of Greece. Every pious Greek will instantly recognize other miraculous icons: the *Voulkaniotissa* in the monastery of Vourcano on Mount Ithomi; the *Phaneromena* at Nea Mechoniana; the *Mother of God* icon in the church of the Dormition on the island of Mytilene, and an icon said to have been painted by St. Luke in the monastery church of Proussos.

In Russia and the Ukraine, official church registers, published before the revolution, listed over two hundred icons considered miraculous by the faithful. The most famous of these were Our Lady of Kazan, Our Lady of Vladimir and Our Lady of Iberia. Many of these were often reproduced and treasured in home-shrines and the "icon-corners" of homes and huts where they made Mary's presence felt in people's daily lives.

True devotion to Mary is best seen in the *Odigitria* icon, the "Virgin Who Points Out the Way," to us heaven-bound travellers. Mary is pictured holding the Infant pointing to Jesus, inviting all her earthly children to come to him.

PART FOUR

THE HOLY MYSTERY OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

CHAPTER XV

Images of Christ's Church

God called to Abraham and made a bargain with him, a convenant, which marked the beginning of his people Israel. These people were special, his chosen ones, his very own. Provided they remained loyal to him, he promised to take care of them, to bless them beyond compare. In order to make them holy, he guided them through the words of his prophets, revealing more and more of himself and of his will. The chosen "People of God" in the Old Law foreshadowed the Church of Christ in the New: *"At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son, the Son that he has appointed to inherit everything and through whom he made everything there is" (Heb 1:1-2).*

Preaching the Kingdom of God

For three years, Jesus trod the byways and highways of Palestine, through hill and dale, village and town. He talked, *"proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom" (Mt 9:35),* wherever there were ears to hear — in the heat of the day, in the cool of the evening, sometimes late into the night.

Dozens of times Jesus spoke of his *basileia,* his kingdom or God's kingdom (he used both terms). *"The time has come,"* he said at the beginning of his public life, *"and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News" (Mk 1:15).* The kingdom is the great family or community of which God himself is the source and into which men must be reborn as his children. Jesus himself explained: *"I tell you most solemnly, unless a man is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* and *"...unless a man is born through water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:3, 5).*

Like God's reign, the kingdom of Jesus is spiritual. On the day he died, he told Pilate, *"Mine is not a kingdom of this world" (Jn 18:36).* Yet his kingdom has roots in the soil of this earth

because it is composed of weak, fallible men. Jesus compared it to a man's wheat field where one night his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat; both are allowed to grow until the harvest *(Mt 13:24-30)*. In his kingdom, the Church, the bad are mixed with the good, sinners live among saints, until the judgment. Jesus illustrated the same truth by another example: the net cast into the sea, a net which brings in a haul of all kinds, good and bad; the bad are thrown away, the good kept.

To show that his kingdom had its small beginnings in him, but that it would slowly grow to a very large size, he used the example of the mustard seed: *''The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all the seeds but when it has grown it is the biggest shrub of all and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and shelter in its branches'' (Mt 13:31-32).*

His kingdom would also work like yeast affecting the whole dough: *''The kingdom of heaven is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through'' (Mt 13:33).*

Our association with God and with each other in this kingdom is worth every effort; in fact it is so precious that we can stake everything on it. It is *''like a treasure in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off happy, sells everything he owns and buys the field'' (Mt 13:44)* or *''like a merchant looking for fine pearls; when he finds one of great value he goes and sells everything he owns and buys it (Mt 13:45-46).''*

Christ's Kingdom and the Byzantine Liturgy

Like her Master, the Byzantine liturgy stresses the importance of Christ's kingdom in many ways. One of the most familiar is the opening blessing in all three Eucharistic Liturgies (Chrysostom, Basil, and the Presanctified Gifts): the priest takes the Gospel Book, containing the words of Jesus himself, and makes the sign of the cross with it over the altar while he says, ''Blessed is the kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and always and forevermore.''

The sign of the cross expresses well what the Fathers all taught

from the earliest centuries: that the Church was born from the side of the Saviour on the cross, like a new Eve, mother of the living. The Gospel Book is a sign of the Old Law being replaced by the New at Christ's death. By dying, Jesus merited our salvation, our entrance into his heavenly kingdom. The Eucharistic Liturgy, a mystical re-enactment of Calvary, applies that merit to us personally; hence, glorification of God's kingdom is most appropriate here.

The Church as Mystical Body of Christ

Before his ascension, Jesus said, *"And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time" (Mk 28:20).* Earlier he had identified himself with his apostles and followers, that is, with his Church: *"Anyone who listens to you listens to me; anyone who rejects you rejects me, and those who reject me reject the one who sent me" (Lk 10:16); "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40); "I am the vine, you are the branches" (Jn 15:5).*

St. Paul, more than any other apostle, develops the teaching of the Mystical Body. The manner of his conversion from an ardent persecutor to zealous promoter of Christ's followers may have had something to do with that. Outside of Damascus, Paul was struck by a blinding light and fell to the ground. Though he could not see Christ, he heard his words, *"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?...I am Jesus, and you are persecuting me" (Ac 9:4-5).*

Paul boldly tells the Church at Corinth, *"Now you together are Christ's body; but each of you is a different part of it" (1 Co 12:27),* explaining, *"Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Co 12:12).* The Church is not a machine consisting of non-living parts working together. When a part of a machine breaks, it does not cause any pain to the other parts. The Church is, rather, like a living human body whose parts — head, organs, hands, feet, fingers, toes, etc. — are so intimately related that the welfare of one effects the welfare of the others. When someone breaks his arm, cuts his finger, or

crushes his nose, the whole body suffers. In a sense, the members of a living body belong to each other, and that is the way it is with the members of the Church: *"So all of us, in union with Christ, form one body, and as parts of it we belong to each other" (Rm 12:5).*

As the members of the human body have different functions, so do the members of Christ's Mystical Body: some are apostles, others teachers; some are leaders, others helpers, etc. *(1 Co 12:27-30),* each working for the good of the whole Body, in unity, in love: *"God put all the separate parts into the body on purpose. If all the parts were the same, how could it be a body? As it is, the parts are many but the body is one" (1 Co 12:18-20).* Christ is the head of this body, the Church, and unites all the members.

This union is first begun at baptism *(1 Co 12:13);* it is continued and perfected by the other sacraments, especially the Eucharist: *"The blessing-cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ, and the bread that we break is a communion with the body of Christ. The fact that there is only one loaf means that, though there are many of us, we form a single body because we all have a share in this one loaf" (1 Co 10:16).*

When Christ lived on earth, he had a human body in which he worked among men. He preached with his mouth, healed with his hands, gave supernatural life with his breath and made atonement with his bodily sufferings. All this, done through his body, was done by God himself.

Now Christ is in heaven with his resurected human body, but he still lives and works among men in and through his Mystical Body, the Church, with which he is organically and inseparably united as our body is with our head. His life, his strength and holiness flow into us because we are his members.

Becoming a member of Christ's Church, therefore, means much more than joining some organization. Being members of his Church means that we are built into his Body so that he can live in us and work through us. His life in us can only cease through deliberate grave sin on our part. After sinning gravely we are still in that Body, but we are dead members: the divine life that courses through Christ's Mystical Body no longer feeds

us. Repentance and reconciliation will again make us living members, pulsating with his life in us.

Because Christ's Mystical Body is alive, it is a growing Body. It grows both through the addition of new members (by baptism) and through a greater participation in Christ's life. Living in Christ means living in truth and in love (which Christ is): *"If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow in all ways into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole body is fitted and joined together, every joint adding its own strength, for each separate part to work according to its function. So the body grows until it has built itself up, in love" (Ep 4:15-16).*

The Church as the People of God

Jesus used the word "Church" *(ecclesia)* only twice *(Mt 16:18 and 18:17).* The word stems from the Old Testament concept of *qahal,* an assembly or congregation called together — God calling together and forming his people Israel out of fallen humanity *(cf. Ex 6:6)* and establishing a covenant with them *(cf. Lv 26:9-12).*

The New Testament continues to unfold God's plan of salvation. Christ and the Church he founded fulfilled the prophecies and promises given to the world through the chosen people of the Old Testament. Christ calls together the Church as his assembly, his people, united by the grace of the Holy Spirit. That is why Peter could write to all Christians: *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart...Once you were not a people at all and now you are the People of God" (1 P 2:9-10, cf. Ep 1:14).*

The expression "People of God," so popularized by the Second Vatican Council, means the Church made up of all members, great and small, each with a special mission — the Pope, bishops, priests, religious and lay people — united in Christ and his sacraments. Actually, this is another way of viewing the Mystical Body of Christ.

The Church as the Bride of Christ

From still another viewpoint, the Church is seen as the Bride of Christ. This, too, is closely allied to the concept of Christ's

Mystical Body. In writing to the Ephesians, St. Paul compares the Church and her relationship to Christ with that of a husband and wife becoming one body. Christ deeply loves his Church, so much so that he *"sacrificed himself for her to make her holy."* He *"made her clean by washing her in water with a form of words, so that when he took her to himself she would be glorious, with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless." (Ep 5:21-33).*

Though some of the Church's members may be sinful, Christ continues to care for her and make her holy through the life-giving streams of grace: through the washing of baptism, the Eucharist, and the other sacraments and rites, blessings and prayers. The covenant by which Christ has united himself with her is indissoluble. She, in her turn, should be faithful and submissive to him, using all his gifts, so that when he will return she will appear in glory with her bridegroom.

The Church as Sacrament

Enlightened by faith, the Eastern Fathers always saw the Church in the total viewpoint of God's design for the world, as the new creation begun at the Incarnation, founded in the Resurrection and established at the first Pentecost. The mystery of the Church is the mystery of Christ, coextensive with salvation, with the divinization of mankind. St. Athanasius, for example, repeatedly taught that the Word of God became man that we might be deified, that we might become "sons of God," and St. Gregory of Nyssa, that "God became one with our nature...so that our nature, by its union with him, might become divine, being delivered from death and from slavery to the Enemy: for (Christ's) return from the dead is the beginning of our return to immortal life for the race of mortal men" *(Great Catechism, 25).*

The place where this divinization is effected by Christ is in the Church through the Holy Spirit. "The Son of God," writes Origen, "can be found only within the community of the faithful because he lives amongst those who are brought together as one." To St. Cyril of Alexandria, the Church is "the holy city that has been sanctified," where we "become like Christ by

sharing in the divine nature through the communication of the Holy Spirit, who sealed us with his seal in the day of our deliverance, when we were washed from every stain and freed from every iniquity;'' it is ''the root of resurrection and salvation'' *(''On Isaiah,'' v, 1. 52).*

Personal faith is saving only in the setting of effective participation in the Church's unity and life. The sacraments and sacramentals with their host of rites and blessings are vehicles of Christ's presence and action in the Church; through them each member is made holy, God-like. In that sense, too, the Church itself is seen as a sacrament, a ''mystery,'' through which Christ acts, touching the souls of his people, so that they can more perfectly believe, hope and love, so that they may become more and more like him.

CHAPTER XVI

Christ Forms His Church

Soon after he began preaching. Jesus moved to form his kingdom, his Church. He did it by calling a little group of men to follow him: *"He went out into the hills to pray; and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. When day came he summoned his disciples and picked out twelve of them; he called them 'apostles': Simon whom he called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot who became a traitor" (Lk 6:12-16).*

These journeyed with Jesus, stayed with him and listened to his teachings. He was preparing them to become "fishers of men." Jesus called them "apostles" meaning "those sent out with orders," because they were sent by him to proclaim God's kingdom, not only to the Jews during his lifetime but later to the whole world. When he sent them to his own countrymen, he told them: *"And as you go, proclaim, that the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.... And if anyone does not welcome you or listen to what you have to say, as you walk out of the house or town shake the dust from your feet. I tell you solemnly, on the day of Judgment it will not go as hard with the land of Sodom and Gomorrah as with that town. Remember, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be cunning as serpents and yet as harmless as doves" (Mt 10:6, 13-16).*

Later Jesus sent the apostles to the whole world: *"Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk 16:16).* They obeyed his orders despite his warnings: *"You will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the pagans. But when they hand you over, do not worry about how to speak or what to say; what you are to say will be given to you when the time comes; because it is not you who will be speaking; the Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you" (Mt 10:18-20).*

Peter's Exceptional Role

People were speculating. Who exactly was this extraordinary man, Jesus? He himself put the question to the apostles and *''Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said, 'the Son of the living God' '' (Mt 16:16).* Because of this declaration of faith, Jesus gave Simon a new name and a pre-eminent position among the apostles.

The name Peter means ''rock.'' On him, ''the rock,'' Jesus promised to build his Church with powers in heaven and on earth: *''I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven'' (Mt 16:18-20).* A more solid foundation than a rock is impossible to come by. A structure on such a foundation, according to the Lord's own words, does not totter despite rains, floods and gales *(Mt 7:25).*

After his resurrection, Jesus fulfilled that promise to Peter. Using the same imagery of shepherding which he had previously applied to himself *(Jn 10:14),* Jesus conferred on Peter the role of shepherd-leader of his flock: *''Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He replied, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'look after my sheep.' Then he said to him a third time, 'Simon son of John do you love me?' Peter was upset that he asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and said, 'Lord, you know everything' you know I love you.' Jesus said to him 'Feed my sheep!'' (Jn 21: 15-17).*

To the Eastern mind, such similes as rock, key, shepherd and flock were more understandable than any legal formula.

Peter Takes Over

Peter understood his role of chief shepherd. Even before the Holy Spirit had come upon the apostles, before Pentecost,

"Peter stood up to speak to the brothers" (Ac 1:15), proposing that another be elected to take the place of Judas in the apostolic ministry. On the day of Pentecost, Peter was the first to preach to the people in Jerusalem *(Ac chap. 2).* It was Peter who was instructed by a vision that the time was ripe to receive gentile converts into the Church; accordingly, *"he then gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ"* and even interpreted the divine will to his brethren in behalf of the gentiles *(Ac chaps. 10 and 11).* Again, it was Peter who gave his opinion first at the council of Jerusalem, and the other apostles submitted to it *(Ac chap. 15).*

Though Peter was not the first to be called, nor was he the oldest, nor even the one most loved by the Lord, he is always mentioned first by the evangelists; in fact, he is expressly called the first: *"These are the names of the twelve apostles; first, Simon who is called Peter...."(Mt 10:2, cf. Mk 3:16, Lk 6:14).* The evangelists accepted the situation as it was: Peter was the chief, the head of the apostles.

While living on earth, Christ was the visible head of the community gathered around him. In heaven, he remains its invisible head *(1 P 2:25),* but he is represented by a visible head — as is evident from the ideas of the Church and the apostles. The Church, for example, is a kingdom, but a kingdom has only one king. It is a living body, but a body has only one visible head. It is a sheepfold *(Jn 10:1),* but in any one fold there is only one shepherd. It is a family or house *(1 Tm 3:15),* but there is only one master. The Church is an ark or ship, but a ship has only one pilot, one captain.

A Mission Shared

Though Christ gave Peter a unique role in his divine mission, he also gave the other apostles authority to participate in it. In fact, his last commission to them was to go and convert the world: *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time"*

(Mt 28:18-20). Before that, he had given them the power of forgiving sins *(Jn 20:21-23)*, of celebrating the Eucharist *(Lk 22:19-20)*, etc.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gave the apostles the strength and light, the courage and zeal to spread Christ's kingdom far and wide. They began immediately — preaching, convincing people of the truth of Christ, Peter being the main spokesman. Eleven men against the whole world, eleven peasants and fishermen, whose natural abilities would scarcely have been enough to organize a village-community, went out to lay the foundations of a kingdom reaching from end to end of the earth!

The Aspotles' Successors

Most of the apostles probably acted as Paul did in evangelizing a community: starting the work, then leaving it to others ordained by them *(cf. 1 Co 3:6, 10; Col 1:7-8, Rm 15:23)*. Paul writes to Titus: *"The reason I left you behind in Crete was for you to get everything organized there and appoint elders* (the Greek word "presbyters," whence the English word "priests") *in every town, in the way that I told you: that is, each of them must be a man of irreproachable character....Since as president* (the Greek word is "episcopos" from which the English word "bishop" is derived,) *he will be God's representative . . . ." (Tt 1:5-7)*.

Writing to Timothy, Paul warns him not to ordain anyone too hastily: *"Do not be too quick to lay hands on any man" (1 Tm 5:22)*. Timothy himself was ordained in a similar rite *(cf. 1 Tm 4:13-16, 2 Tm 1:6-7)*.

Like all men, the apostles were mortal, but their mission would last until the end of time. They knew this, and made sure they would have successors. Pope St. Clement of Rome, writing in A.D. 96, says the apostles themselves "left instructions that when they should die, other approved men should succeed them in their sacred ministry" ("Letter to the Corinthians," 44).

When a Christian community reached a certain degree of organization, maturity and increase, a bishop was ordained for it. He in turn could ordain priests and deacons to provide for

its future needs. Antioch already had such a threefold ministry at the time of St. Ignatius, for he writes (c. A.D. 106): "Be careful therefore to observe one Eucharist; for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup unto union in his blood; there is one altar, as there is one bishop, together with the presbyters priests and the deacons...." ("Letter to the Philadelphians." 4).

The process of ordaining successors — bishops, priests and deacons — went on through the centuries in an unbroken line until today. It will continue until the world ends. This is what Jesus meant when he told the apostles he would be with them until the end of time. The pope, bishops, priests and deacons are not substitutes for Christ, but persons through whom Christ continues to care for his own, continues to teach, rule and make men holy.

The Pope, Successor to Peter

Since the beginning, East and West acknowledged the bishop of Rome as the successor of St. Peter, the head of the apostles, accepting his supreme authority. The trouble within the Church of Corinth towards the end of the first century A.D. clearly illustrates this point. St. John, the last surviving apostle, was still living at Ephesus when the dispute broke out. It would have been natural for the Corinthian clergy to turn to John who had known Christ personally and was universally venerated. Yet, they asked Clement, the third bishop of Rome, to settle the problem. Pope Clement in his "Letter to the Corinthian Church" not only advises obedience, he *commands* it, reminding the miscreants that disobedience to his commands would be sinful. In order that similar troubles would not happen in the future, this letter was publicly read from time to time in the Corinthian Church.

A few years later (A.D. 106), St. Ignatius of Antioch draws attention to the supremacy of the Church of Rome when he addressed his "Epistle" to it: "To the Church...that presides in the district of the Romans, and which is worthy of God, worthy of honor, worthy of the highest happiness, worthy of praise, worthy of credit, worthy of being deemed holy, and which is the head of the union of charity i.e., of Christendom."

In opposing Gnostic heretics about the year A.D. 180, St. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, lists in sequence the successors of Peter by name as the bishops of the Church of Rome and quotes the doctrines of that Church as authentically handed down from the apostles. For this reason, he writes, "it is a matter of necessity that every church should agree with this church, on account of its pre-eminent authority" ("Against the Heresies," III, 3, 2).

At the end of the second century, Pope Victor used his authority to command, under pain of excommunication, the bishops in and around Ephesus to conform with the common usage regarding the date of Easter (Eusebius, "Hist. of the Church," V, 24). They obeyed.

After referring to "Peter, upon whom the Lord built the Church speaking one for all," Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, in his letter to Pope Cornelius (A.D. 252) also mentions "the chair of Peter and the chief church whence the unity of the priesthood has its source" (Epist. 59, 7 and 14).

Later references to the primacy of the Pope are too numerous to include here. They may be found in the writings of such men as Cyril of Jerusalem, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Theodore the Studite, etc. Their testimony is true and unequivocal, their words being as clear and objective as their teachings regarding Christ as Son of God. While the Eastern bishop balanced the supremacy of the Pope with collegiality — a sharing of power — they always appealed to the Pope whenever trouble broke out in their See. Sozomen, the fifth-century Church historian, sums up the attitude and conviction of the whole Christian world in those centuries when he writes: "When the controversy about the divinity of the Holy Spirit broke out, the bishop of Rome Liberius, who died in A.D. 366, wrote to the churches of the East that they should with the bishops of the West confess the three Persons in God, equal in substance and in dignity. All submitted, since the case was decided by the Church of Rome, and thus the controversy ended" (Hist. of the Church," VI, 22).

More expressive than anything else regarding the Pope's supremacy was the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) and its

aftermath. When Pope St. Leo's letter condemning Monophysitism was read to the assembled bishops at that Council, all of them applauded and exclaimed, "Peter speaks through Leo!" And the bishops settled the matter in accordance with the Pope's definition. Later, the Patriarchs, Maximos of Antioch, Anatolius of Constantinople, and Juvenal of Jerusalem wrote a letter to Pope St. Leo in which not only are the events at the Council recounted but the Pope's primacy is clearly recognized:

> "You have indeed preserved the faith, which has come down to us like a golden stream flowing at the command of our divine Teacher. Constituted, as you are, the interpreter of the words of the Blessed Peter for all mankind, you have poured forth upon the universe the blessings he elicited by his faith. Hence we have looked to you as to the leader of our religion to our great advantage. You indeed, as head among the members, presided here in the person of your representatives, who led the way by their correct counsel."

The same letter also recounts the excesses and anger of the Patriarch of Alexandria, Dioscoros, whom the Council deposed:

> "He extended his fury even against him who has been entrusted by the Saviour with the guardianship of the vineyard — we mean your Holiness — and planned his excommunication, after you have been so zealous to keep the body of the Church united!"

The Byzantine liturgy, both Catholic and Orthodox, teaches no less regarding the primacy. On November 25th, the feast of Pope St. Clement, a canticle of the Vesper Service has: "Peter, the Prince of the apostles, left thee as a worthy successor of himself; after him thou didst rule the Church most capably." For the feast of Pope St. Martin, April 13th, a passage has: "O Martin, thou hast adorned the divine See of Peter and by means of his divine rock thou hast preserved the Church unbroken." For the feast of Pope St. Leo, February 18th, it has: "As the

successor of the divine Peter, enriched with his presidency and primacy, Leo published his divinely inspired definition.'' The reference here is to Pope St. Leo's letter to the Council of Chalcedon.

Today, the successor of St. Peter is known by various titles: Pope, Holy Father, Supreme Pontiff, Vicar of Christ, Visible Head of the Church and, best of all, Servant of the Servants of God. His line of succession is unbroken from the first Pope, St. Peter, as may be seen in any history book.

The Pope's duty, like that of Peter, is to shepherd and lead the Church. His jurisdiction extends to the entire Church of Christ; he is bishop, not only of Rome, but of the universal Church. As chief shepherd, he is bishop over all his fellow bishops and over all the faithful, individually and collectively, just as a shepherd is responsible for the welfare of the whole flock and for every one of its sheep. His responsibility and authority extend to the teachings of Christ's truths, moral and doctrinal, as well as to the mechanics of governing the whole Church — all of which powers are directed to sanctifying the flock of Christ, to making holy the people of God.

Aspostolic Collegiality

Jesus told Peter to lead and shepherd the flock, the Church, but he was not to do this alone; he was to work together with the other apostles in a brotherly, collegial way. Likewise today, the Pope as Peter's successor leads the shepherds and Church in fraternal, collegial unity with his fellow bishops, successors of the apostles.

The Second Vatican Council described collegiality in this way: ''Just as, by the Lord's will, St. Peter and the other apostles constituted one apostolic college, so in a similar way the Roman Pontiff as the successor of Peter, and the bishops as the successors of the apostles are joined together'' ''(Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,'' 22).

Though ''collegiality'' has been popularized only since Vatican II, it has been at work from the beginning. The apostles, headed by Peter, acted as a body after Christ's ascension to choose Mathias in the place of Judas *(Ac 1:15-26),* they met in

council at Jerusalem to settle the thorny problem of whether gentile converts had to follow the Jewish laws *(Ac 15:5-29)*. Throughout the ages the Pope and the bishops from every part of the Church have come together in ecumenical councils to clarify doctrine or discipline.

During the last session of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI outlined a new kind of cooperation in the Church when he established the Synod of Bishops. This consists of a group of bishops from all over the world who represent other bishops from their respective regions to assist the Holy Father in his work. In this way, the Pope gets to know the opinions, needs, and concerns of all the bishops and people the world over before any papal decisions are made. The Synod of Bishops has been meeting regularly ever since.

Included in each bishop's consecration (his ordination to the fullness of the priesthood) are: (1) the power to make the people of God holy, especially by imparting the sacraments to them (including the consecration of bishops); (2) the power to teach authoritatively and to share in divine guidance for the handing on of revealed truth; (3) the power to govern and direct the people of God.

A bishop's power to sanctify, imparted to him at his consecration, means that he can act validly even through he may separate himself from the unity of the Church, that is, the validity and principal effects of any sacrament he confers, are unquestioned, regardless of his unworthy dispositions. The other two powers, the teaching authority and pastoral government, are rooted in episcopal consecration, but their validity depends upon a state of communion with the Holy Father and the other bishops of the Church. In other words, episcopal collegiality can be exercised authentically only if a bishop, or a group of bishops, is in actual communion with the Holy Father and the rest of the hierarchy united with the Pope. If no such communion exists, no assurance of divine approval can be expected. The same may be said of priests delegated by their bishop to exercise such powers on behalf of the faithful.

CHAPTER XVII

Christ Shepherds His Chuch

The prophets announced Christ as *teacher, king,* and *priest.* He proved himself such by his teaching, by instituting the New Law, and by his sacrifice at the Last Supper and on the cross.

This triple office of teaching, ruling and sanctifying, and the powers that go with it, Jesus transmitted to the apostles and their successors when he said: *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore, make disciples of all the nations, baptize them" etc. (Mt 28:18-20).* Through the present successors of the apostles, Jesus continues to teach, rule and sanctify his people. Christ's presence and action in his Church today is not imaginary, but real.

Jesus Teaches His Church

Jesus teaches through those he sends. This was true while he lived on earth *(Lk 10:1)* and after he went back to heaven: *"While they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it" (Mk 16:20).* He continues to teach today through their successors, for he promised to be with them always till the end of time *(Mt 28:20).*

The Holy Father and the other bishops, being successors to Peter and the other apostles, are the authentic teachers and witnesses of the faith under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They exercise their office by believing, guarding and preaching divine truth faithfully and entirely. In them, God guards his revelation, his truth, and hands it on to his faithful.

God's truth, his deposit of faith, is contained in the Sacred Scriptures and in tradition. Here, tradition means not mere human customs and usages, which can be discarded once their temporary values become useless, but the "handing on" faithfully whatever the Lord taught and revealed, even though not through the Scriptures. There were indeed many other things which Jesus did and taught: *"if all were written down, the world itself . . . would not hold all the books that would have to be*

written'' (Jn 21:25).

God's public revelation came to an end with the death of the apostles. The task of the Church since then has been to ''hand on'' that deposit of faith entrusted to the apostles and to keep it free from errors, as Paul writes to Timothy: *''Keep as your pattern the sound teaching you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. You have been trusted to look after something precious; guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us'' (2 Tm 1:13-14).*

''The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living magisterium of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ'' (Vatican II, ''Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,'' 9). ''Magisterium'' means the teaching office of the Church which is unable to err in believing or teaching revealed truth — it is infallible when making solemn pronouncements in matters of faith or morals in accordance with Christ's promise to the apostles that he would send his Spirit of truth *''to be with you for ever'' (Jn 14:16)* and *''he will lead you to the complete truth'' (Jn 16:13).* These words indicate that the object of the Holy Spirit's help is to preserve the faith, God's truth, pure and free from error and this, not only in the apostles, but also in their successors who have the same mission of teaching that truth. Some confuse infallibility with impeccability, the idea that the Pope and the bishops cannot sin. They can, like any other human being.

The infallible teaching office is exercised in two ways: through the *ordinary magisterium* and through the *extraordinary magisterium.*

ORDINARY MAGISTERIUM.

Paul told Titus, *''whether you are giving instructions or correcting errors, you can do so with full authority, and no one is to question it'' (Tt 2:15).* No less is true of every bishop when he imparts whatever the Holy Father and all the bishops of the world teach on faith and morals — whether it be in ordinary preaching, catechetical instructions, or in pastoral letters and directives.

''Although the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative

of infallibility, they can nevertheless proclaim Christ's doctrine infallibly. This is so, even when they are dispersed around the world, provided that while maintaining the bond of unity among themselves and with Peter's successor, and while teaching authentically on a matter of faith or morals, they concur in a single viewpoint as the one which must be held conclusively'' (Vatican II, ''Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,'' 25).

When the bishops teach infallibly, they are doing what Christ commanded them to do, what Paul expected of Timothy: *''Before God and before Christ Jesus who is to be judge of the living and the dead, I put this duty to you, in the name of his Appearing and of his kingdom: proclaim the message and, welcome or unwelcome, insist on it. Refute falsehood, correct error, call to obedience — but do all with patience and with the intention of teaching'' (2 Tm 4:1-2).*

A regrettable fact of history is that individual bishops or even groups of bishop have been found wanting in teaching God's truth, have even taught ''novel doctrines'' and error differing from the body of bishops and the Pope who continued to be faithful to God's word. Paul warned Timothy to expect it: *''The time is sure to come when, far from being content with sound teaching, people will be avid for the latest novelty and collect themselves a whole series of teachers according to their own tastes; and then, instead of listening to the truth, they will turn to myths'' (2 Tm 4:3-4).*

Since Vatican II, a whole series of teachers and theologians have expounded novel doctrines, some perhaps true, others almost certainly not, but they are not the official teaching voice of the Church; this belongs to the whole body of bishops and the Holy Father as successors of the apostles and Peter. The faith is not founded on mere scholarship, but on Christ's word and grace.

Theologians can and should be important helpers of the bishops, aiding them to understand the depths of God's truth, but they do not take the bishops' place in officially teaching Christ's truth to the faithful.

EXTRAORDINARY MAGISTERIUM.

The extraordinary magisterium of the Church, also infallible, is exercised in two ways: (1) in general councils, and (2) in

ex cathedra ("from the chair") definitions of doctrine by the Holy Father.

(1) *General Councils,* also known as ecumenical councils, are the gatherings of all the bishops, together with the Holy Father as head of the Church (or his legate), in order to make definitive statements on faith, morals, or church discipline. Some statements of general councils are not meant to be infallible teaching but are merely disciplinary or pastoral. A general council, however, is the way in which a doctrine is usually defined.

Whenever major heresies and doctrinal controversies have arisen, the Church's bishops have met in general council. Though many experts and scholars accompany the bishops to advise them, only the bishops vote. Usually, a thorough search of the Scriptures is made to see what Jesus and the apostles taught on the subject; then there is an examination of Tradition as contained in early sourches (books, documents, etc.) to see what the early Christians believed and practiced. If proof exists from the Scriptures and Tradition that a given truth has been taught by Christ and the apostles and accepted by the early Christians, an exact formulation of doctrine is made. Such solemn "definitions" are infallible, though it does not mean that the same truths cannot also be formulated in other expressions and words. They can and often are: the language may change, but the underlying divine truths do not.

Twenty-one such councils have taken place in the history of the Church, beginning with the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 and ending with Vatican II, in 1962-65.

(2) *Ex cathedra definitions of doctrine by the Holy Father* are also infallible; that is, when the Holy Father (a) as supreme pastor and teacher of the whole Church (b) pronounces a teaching regarding faith or morals (c) to be held by the whole Church. The Pope's authority and power derives from Christ, not from the other bishops, or even by delegation from the Church; hence, he does not need their approval to make an *ex cathedra* definition. On the other hand, a papal pronouncement does not fall within the scope of infallibility if any of the three conditions is missing.

(a) The Pope must officially speak as supreme pastor and teacher of the whole Church. This means that if he speaks as a private teacher or as an author of religious treatises or books, he is liable to err as any other scholar of the Church.

(b) The Pope's pronouncement must deal with faith or morals, including truths intimately connected with them. This means that the Pope is not free from the possibility of error in matters of natural science, such as geology, physics, mathematics, etc., in fact, in anything not pertaining to the deposit of faith.

Nor does the Pope have authority to invent totally new doctrines not found in the deposit of faith. The First Vatican Council clearly stated: "For the Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter in order that they might spread abroad new doctrine which he reveals, but that, under his assistance, they might guard inviolably, and with fidelity explain, the revelation or deposit of faith handed down by the apostles" The Pope is the interpreter and expounder of revelation, not its author.

(c) The Pope must propose his pronouncement to the whole Church for belief. His addresses and exhortations to pilgrims or to some particular groups, though carrying great weight, do not fall within the scope of infallibility, nor do his statements to the faithful of the whole world if he does not intend to define some doctrine.

Though the scope of papal infallibility is limited to the above conditions, this does not mean that we, the faithful, can take the Holy Father's other statements lightly, especially his encyclical letters. His supreme authority must be "acknowledged with reverence," and the judgments made by him must be "adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will here may be known chiefly either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking" (Vatican II, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 25).

The Lord's warning applies today as it did in his time *"Anyone who listens to you listens to me; anyone who rejects you rejects*

me, and those who reject me reject the one who sent me'' (Lk 10:16).

Christ Rules His Church

The authority given by Christ rests in his words outlined above (especially in *Mt 28:18);* this includes the authority to rule the flock of Christ. The office of ruling is also seen in the image of the Church as the kingdom of Christ: a kingdom is governed by one ruler and his assistants. A special authority was given to Peter, the rock; he was given the keys, symbols of the ruler in the house.

Jesus taught all to recognize legitimate authority even in those who are unworthy of it. He told the people: *''The scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do what they tell you and listen to what they say, but do not be guided by what they do; since they do not practice what they preach'' (Mt 23:2-3).* It has happened in the Church that those who governed were unworthy of it, but the mind of Christ is clear: their authority was legitimate.

Jesus himself also taught how those who are in authority are to exercise it: *''Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many'' (Mt 20:27-28).* In order that his apostles forever remember how they were to exercise their authority, Jesus resorted to the dramatic gesture of washing their feet: *''If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you'' (Jn 13:14-15).*

The Pope and the other bishops of the Church, as successors to Peter and the other apostles, are heirs to the ruling power of Christ. They are the ''overseers'' (Ac 20:28).

The bishops take part in the Church's government in two ways. First, each bishop ''oversees,'' administers that part of the Church assigned to him by the Pope or patriarch; he does it personally and through the priests whom he in turn appoints. Secondly, the bishops govern the Church collegially with the

Holy Father when they meet either in council or in synod, issue disciplinary decrees and regulations for the whole Church. The office of ruling serves to promote the growth of faith and holiness in the Church.

The ordinary and recurrent rules for the government of the Church are contained in a book called the "Code of Canon Law." The bishops of each country also usually list the main duties of their faithful as "precepts" of the Church: these include such duties as attendance at the Eucharistic Liturgy on Sundays and holy days of obligation, the avoidance of unnecessary work on such days, the observance of the Church's marriage laws, the obligations of penance, of annual confession and Easter communion.

Christ Sanctifies His Church

Paul wrote to the Church at Philippi: *"My prayer is that your love for each other may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception so that you can always recognize what is best. This will help you to become pure and blameless, and prepare you for the Day of Christ, when you will reach the perfect goodness which Jesus Christ produces in us for the glory and praise of God" (Ph 1:9-11).* His prayer echoes the most important work of the Church: to sanctify the souls of men, to make them holy, to make them more God-like. All teaching and ruling in the Church are directed to this one all-important purpose. For this, Christ came to earth; for this, Christ died: *"Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her to make her holy" (Ep 5:25).*

Christ continues his priestly work of making men holy in his Church, through preaching, and blessing, and especially through the sacraments. When the life-giving waters of baptism are poured on a baby, it is really Christ who baptizes. He is present in reconciling sinners through his priests by the power of forgiving sins in his name *(cf. Jn 20:20-23).* He himself speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the parish church: they are his very words. When the faithful gather to pray and sing, he is there in their midst: *"For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them" (Mt 18:20).* Most of all, he

is present in the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Divine Liturgy, where he not only offers himself anew through the ministry of his priests, but personally comes to communicants under the forms of bread and wine.

The sacramental mysteries are the chief ways of making men holy. Through them, the Church itself may be called a sacramental mystery, or the "sacrament of sacraments."

CHAPTER XVIII

How Christ's Church Can Be Recognized

When Jesus turned to Peter and said, *"on this rock I will build my Church" (Mt 16:18),* he did not say *"Churches;"* so there can by only one Church founded by him.

Paul warned Timothy about future dissensions in the Church and deviation from the truths of faith taught by Christ and the apostles *(1 Tm 6:2-6, 2 Tm 4:3-4).* These happened only too soon.

One of the most serious was Gnosticism. As a mixture of Christianity and paganism, it markedly disrupted the harmony of the Church a few generations after the apostles. The Gnostics claimed a "secret tradition" allegedly handed down by a "succession of teachers" linked with the apostles. When accused by the Christians of novelty of doctrines, the Gnostics countered that their doctrines were nothing new but were being made public for the first time. The Church's leaders counter-claimed by insisting on the public tradition of doctrine through the "succession" of official teachers, the bishops, in each local Church. Doctrinal truth and its authenticity, as well as its continuity, could be checked against the *public* "handing on" of doctrines by tracing the succession of the Church's official teachers, the bishops, back to the apostles and what was being taught at the time by *all* of them. Moreover, their doctrines agreed with the Old and New Testament Scriptures. The doctrines of the Gnostics differed not only from the Scriptures and the official bishops' teachings, but also among themselves; therefore, they were heretical, false.

To counter these and similar problems in the early Church, the Fathers clarified the standards which mark the true Church of Christ. It is *one, holy, catholic* and *apostolic*. Written into some of the earliest Creeds, these standards or marks have ever remained in the Catholic Church till the present time, and they are still the best measures of whether a Church is or is not the true Church founded by Christ.

Christ's Church is One

Before he went out to die, Jesus prayed for his followers: *"Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us....I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me" (Jn 17:11, 20-21).* This oneness is preserved in two ways: (1) unity of authority-leadership, also called communion, and (2) unity of faith.

(1) UNITY OF AUTHORITY-LEADERSHIP means being submissive to the authority of the Pope as successor of St. Peter and to the bishops in communion with him. In practice, this means that the faithful are in direct communion with their parish priests, the priests with their bishops, and the bishops with the Holy Father. It is also the bond by which all are joined socially through their participating in the same seven sacraments and the same worship.

Jesus willed the Church to have a hierarchical unity by appointing Peter and the other apostles to teach, sanctify and rule in his name. Their successors are equally rulers and guardians of the Church by the will of the Holy Spirit *(cf. Ac 20:8).* Futhermore, Jesus promised to be with those teaching and shepherding his flock till the end of time *(cf. Mt 28:20).*

It is mainly the visible authority of the Church that produces internal unity, the unity of faith, so often urged by St. Paul: *"Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as you were all called into one and the same hope when you were called. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of all" (Ep 4:3-6).*

(2) UNITY OF FAITH means that the Church's members are united in believing the same religious truths proposed to them for acceptance by the Church. It is the kind of unity to which St. Paul exhorted the dissentious Corinthians: *"I do appeal to you, brothers, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, to make up the differences between you, and instead of disagreeing among*

yourselves, to be united again in your belief and practice'' (1 Co 1:10). Unity of leadership makes the unity of faith much easier.

Down through Christian history — and it holds as true today as ever — a good test for determining whether a religious truth is genuine or not is this: does it basically deviate from what is being officially taught by the Church the world over? If it does, the doctrine is suspect and may be false, no matter which famous theologian proposes it. This, of course, does not mean that a given doctrine of the Church has to be expressed uniformly everywhere. The infinite realities of God cannot be contained in our finite, limited words or ideas, yet the basic message of God's truth can always be expressed in some way.

As long as God's truth is not changed, the Church can and should express it in ways that are best understood in any time or place. On the other hand, if a theologian or teacher interprets a doctrine in such a way that it comes to mean something completely different from what the Church teaches, then, it may well be a ''new,'' false doctrine.

Paul warned against such false interpreters in his day: *''Some troublemakers among you want to change the Good News of Christ; and let me warn you that if anyone preaches to you a version of the Good News different from the one we have already preached to you, whether it be ourselves or an angel from heaven, he is to be condemned. I am only repeating what we told you before: if anyone preaches a version of the Good News different from the one you have already heard, he is to be condemned'' (Ga 1:7-9).*

Christ's Church is Holy

Any Church claiming holiness as her distinguishing mark must have a founder whose undeniable holiness and miracles can prove that he was sent by God. In the New Testament, Jesus proved his holiness and his claim to be from God, indeed, God's Son, by his many miracles, especially by his resurrection.

Even during the lifetime of some apostles, there were would-be reformers who lacked these attributes, as is clear from St. John's words: *''Those rivals of Christ came out*

of our own number, but they had never really belonged; if they had belonged, they would have stayed with us; but they left us, to prove that not one of them ever belonged to us'' (1 Jn 2:19).

Jesus was holy because he was God and proved it. The Church he founded is holy only because of its relationship or attachment to him *(cf. Ep 5:25-27)*. The more the Church's members participate in his presence, the more intimate their relationship to him, the holier they became. They do this by living according to Christ's religious and moral teachings, by participating in the Eucharistic sacrifice, receiving the sacraments and obeying the directives of the Church's rules. There is also the mysterious, mystical communication of merits resulting from the ''communion of saints,'' that is, not only between the more holy and less holy members on earth, but between those in heavenly glory and the members of the pilgrim Church here below. All these sanctifying forces ultimately come from Christ, animating the Mystical Body, the Church.

Some members of the Church live sinful lives. Their wickedness, however, is caused not by anything the Church teaches or practices, but by their own failures. Wherever the Catholic faith is lived earnestly, Christ brings forth fruits of abundant holiness, even to the point of martyrdom. In the early centuries of the Church, hundreds of thousands suffered and died for Christ. In the last half century alone, countless Catholics endured imprisonment, torture and death for him. Many men and women have consecrated their lives totally to Christ by voluntary vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, and staff the Church's many institutions — teaching, mothering, caring for the sick, the crippled and aged, helping the poor. *''By their fruits you shall know them''* was Christ's own standard for distinguishing the good from the bad *(Mt 7:16)*.

Christ's Church is Catholic

Though Jesus never used the word ''Catholic,'' meaning ''universal,'' regarding his Church, he clearly intended his Church to serve all nations. He foretold it *(Mt 24:14, Ac 1:8)* and commanded it *(Mt 28:19, Mk 16:15)*. The apostles and their disciples obeyed his command: within thirty years after the

Lord's death, the faith was being preached in the whole world as known at the time, the Mediterranean basin *(Rm 1:8, cf. Rm 10:8).*

St. Ignatius of Antioch first used the word *katholike* (Greek for "catholic" or "universal) in A.D. 107, to describe the true Church of Christ, distinguishing it from heretical or schismatic groups: "Where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church" ("Letter to the Smyrneans," 8, 2). Within a century, the term "universal" or "catholic" aquired the two meanings we now give it: its extension throughout the whole world, and its faithfulness to the whole doctrine of Christ.

The separation into Catholic and Orthodox is a sad consequence of human imperfection. It came about mostly as a conflict of authority, and in very small part, from differences in doctrinal interpretations. There were abuses on both sides. True reconciliation is being attempted. At all times, the Orthodox have enjoyed the full validity of the sacraments, including the ordination of priests, bishops and patriarchs.

At the time of the major break, in 1054, the custom of capitalizing the word "Catholic" began, chiefly as a means of distinction from the "Orthodox."

There has always been a close connection between the Church's universality and missionary endeavor. Down the ages, the Church's apostles were ever-zealous, ever-fervid, eager to preach Christ's Good News to every creature, transforming many nations and groups of nations, incorporating them into the Mystical Body of Christ. No other Church has ever converted even one heathen country to Christianity; the Catholic Church can claim dozens! This is a sign of her divine character.

Gladstone, the Anglican nineteenth-century statesman, eloquently recognized the Catholic Church's universality when he wrote:

> "She has marched for fifteen hundred years at the head of civilization, and has harnessed... the chief intellectual and material forces of the world; her art, the art of the world; her genius, the genius of the world; her greatness, glory,

> grandeur, and majesty have been almost, though not absolutely, all that in these respects the world has had to boast of. Her children are more numerous than all the members of the sects combined; she is every day enlarging the boundaries of her vast empire; her altars are raised in every clime, and her missionaries are to be found wherever there are men to be taught the evangel of immortality and souls to be saved. And this wondorous Church, which is as old as Christianity and as *universal as mankind,* is today, after its twenty centuries of age, as fresh and vigorous and as fruitful as on the day the Pentecostal fires were showered upon the earth. Surely such an institution challenges the attention and demands the most serious examination of those outside its pale!''

The Church's catholicity also includes the mysterious paradox whereby the same unity of faith and authority has been embraced by such a variety of peoples, rich and poor, young and old, unlettered and highly educated, from all cultures, from almost every nation on earth! Nothing like it has been seen in the world's organizations, League of Nations or United Nations, which seem incapable of rising above national or political interests. Nothing like it has been seen in the world's religions which keep on fragmenting into further divisions, groups and subgroups, on national or doctronial grounds. In the Catholic Church, *''There are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus'' (Ga 3:38)*

Christ's Church is Apostolic

Only a Church that is *apostolic* can be the Church founded by Christ. What the apostles learned from Jesus, they taught. What authority he gave them, for ruling or sanctifying, they put into practice. To be apostolic, (1) the Church's origin must go back to the apostles; (2) its teachings must be the same as those which the apostles received from Christ and put into practice;

and (3) the succession of its pastors must be unbroken, going back to Peter and the other apostles.

1. APOSTOLIC ORIGIN. Only that Church which is built upon the unshakable foundation laid by Christ can be his true Church. This visible foundation was Peter, the rock, and the other apostles. The Catholic Church does rest upon St. Peter and the other apostles whose mandate and authority continue in their successors, the Pope and the bishops in union with him. This is a matter of history.

2. The Church's TEACHINGS must be the same as those which the apostles received from Christ, which they preached and put into practice. Hungry as many are for the truth of Christ, they try to revise his truth to lessen its demands on them. Even though it meant defections from its ranks by the thousands, the Catholic Church steadfastly continues to teach what the apostles heard from the lips of the Saviour regarding the unbreakable bond of marriage, its own teaching office, abortion, euthanasia, artificial birth control, etc.

The apostles used the seven sacraments to make men holy — not two or three, but all seven. Their effects last for time and for eternity, deriving their authority from the power given to the apostles to loose and bind. *"Whatever you bind on earth,"* Jesus told them, *"shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven" (Mt 18:18).* To summarize these seven all-important means which the apostles used to make men holy: (For a more complete development, see below, p.p. 252, ff.).

Baptism. Jesus charged the apostles to baptize *(Mt 28:18-20)* and they obeyed *(e.g., Ac 2:41, 10:48, 19:5, etc.).*

Confirmation-chrismation. The apostles also imparted the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands: the Samarians, as we read in Acts *(8:14ff.)* *"had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus,"* so the apostles Peter and John went and *"laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit."*

Holy Eucharist. Jesus gave the apostles the ability to do what he had done at the Last Supper: after changing bread and wine into his own body and blood, he charged them to do the same, *"Do this as a memorial of me" (Lk 22:19).*

The sacrament of Reconciliation. The power to forgive sins is divine, but this too he gave to the apostles: *'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' After saying this he breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.''' (Jn 20:21-23).*

The Anointing of the Sick. Another apostolic practice was the anointing of the sick, whereby a person is always healed spiritually but sometimes even physically, as we read in James *(5:14-16).*

The Sacrament of Holy Orders. The apostles ordained others; that is, they gave the sacrament of Holy Orders to their successors by the laying on of hands *(1 Tm 4:13-16, 2 Tm 1:6-7, cf. Ac 13:3, 14:22),* thereby handing down to their successors the spiritual powers they had received from the Lord.

Matrimony. Though the Scriptures do not speak of Christian marriage as a sacrament in an immediately apparent way, St. Paul does so by implication: the Christian marriage mysteriously signifies the union of Christ with the Church *(Ep 5:22ff.)* Since the union of Christ with the Church is supernatural, imparting grace, holiness and salvation, the Christian marriage-union must also be supernatural, imparting grace, holiness, and salvation to its members, the couple.

We in the twentieth century need these great sacramental gifts of grace no less than did the people in apostolic times or a thousand years ago. Any Church which does not impart all these sacraments cannot claim to be doing what the apostles did, cannot possibly be apostolic in its practices, and therefore cannot be the true Church of Christ. The Catholic Church does continue to impart all seven sacraments as the apostles did.

3. The SUCCESSION of the Church's pastors must be unbroken, going back to Peter and the other apostles. The apostles could not live forever: they would die like the rest of men, but their mission was to last until the end of time as Jesus had promised. They clearly understood this and chose their successors, as Paul did with Timothy and Titus. This transmission of power is called "apostolic succession." The line of papal succession has remained unbroken: the present Pope John Paul II is the 264th

Pope or the 263rd after Peter. The names and pontificate of each Pope, complete with dates, can be examined and studied even in secular history books.

Our Separated Brothers and Sisters

Though Jesus established only one Church, his followers are now divided into several hundred "Churches" or denominations. Most non-Catholic Christians, however, were born in their respective churches hundreds of years after their separation from the visible unity with the successors of the apostles under Peter. No one can charge them with sin for being separated. Many are sincere and deeply devoted to Christ. They are loved by Christ for their sincerity: the "Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers. Those who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are brought into a certain though imperfect communion with the Catholic Church" (Vatican II, "Decree on Ecumenism" I, 3), for they have "the written word of God, the life of grace, faith, hope and charity, and other inner gifts and visible elements from the Holy Spirit" *(ibid.)*.

Surely those who sincerely intend in their hearts to do all that God wants of them will not be excluded from salvation; they have a certain membership by desire in the Church founded by Christ. On the other hand, formal adherence and membership in the Catholic Church is not merely optional, something we are free to do or not to do, as for instance joining a club. Christ cares deeply that we join his true Church in order that we enjoy the fullness of his heritage, the totality of his revelation, the richness of his sacraments and other means of sanctification. This so impressed St. Cyprian as early as the third century that he formulated the maxim, "Outside the Church there is no salvation," a truth which the Church had always taught — always presupposing full knowledge and realization that the Catholic Church is the true Church of Christ.

This notion has been interpreted too often in the sense that formal membership in the Roman Catholic Church is a condition of salvation. Membership in the Church of Christ is rather a matter of intent and good will than of actual registration. Loving

men and women who seek the truth and who, for some reason, historical or other, have been prevented from joining the members of the Church of Rome are assured of salvation, whatever their formal allegiance. Even pagans may be covered by "membership of desire." The assumption is that, had they known about it, they would have joined the Church of Christ. God does not deprive of eternal happiness those who did not have a chance of knowing him through Christ.

CHAPTER XIX

"Heaven on Earth"

When the early Christians gathered on the Lord's day to hear the word of God, for prayer and the Eucharist, they secretly assembled in each other's homes. They had no choice. Their worship was high treason, punishable by death, because it opposed the state religion. Among themselves, they referred to these gatherings as the assemblies of the Lord.

As soon as the Christians were free to worship openly, in A.D. 313, they began to remodel large homes into "house-churches." Later, they constructed special buildings for worship which they called "houses of God." Our English word "church", in fact, indirectly derives from the Greek *kyriakon,* meaning "the Lord's." They also used another word, *basilica,* meaning house of the King, i.e., of God. They felt that the place where they worshiped should reflect the holiness of what was taking place. Every later generation has sought to build churches worthy of the Eucharistic Lord, lavishly decorating them with mosaics, paintings and other works of art.

A church is indeed the "house of the Lord." The Greeks and, after them, the Slavs approach their worship as a participation in the liturgy of heaven; that is why they sought to create the church as a "heaven on earth," even though they realized that the things of earth are but shadows, symbols, of the true realities of heaven. This explains the abundant use of symbolism in their churches.

Church Exteriors

There is no need to dwell here on the architectural style of Byzantine churches. Whether they come with Greek hemispheric domes or Slav onion-shaped cupolas, in the general Byzantine style, the Baroque, in the enchanting Bojko or Hucul style, or in any other, Byzantine churches display great symbolism in their shape and orientation.

CHURCH FORMS OR SHAPES

The ordinary oblong or rectangular shape of church buildings

symbolizes a ship or ark which transports the faithful to the haven of salvation, heaven, through the stormy seas of life. The idea of comparing the church with a ship, the bishop to its captain, the priests to its officers, the deacons to sailors, and the faithful to passengers goes back to the fourth or fifth century (cf. "Apost. Constitutions," II, 57; also the "Clementine" "Epistle to James, 14).

A church built in the form of a cross has the obvious symbolism of Christ's martyrdom.

A few churches are circular or star-shaped. A church built in the form of a circle represents the eternal Church of Christ (a beginning or an end cannot be seen in a circle). The star-shaped church is seen as the shining grace of Christ enlightening the world.

CHURCH DOMES

The number of domes surmounting Byzantine churches has significance too. One dome typifies unity, One God, one invisible Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. Three domes, the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. Five domes, Christ and the four evangelists (or also the five ancient apostolic Sees, i.e., Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople). Seven domes on the more elaborate structures represent the seven sacraments by which the Church pours grace into the souls of its faithful (or also the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit). Still more elaborate are the churches with nine and thirteen domes: the former symbolize the nine choirs of angels; the latter, Christ and the twelve apostles.

The octagonal, onion-shaped dome, characteristic of Ukrainian and Russian churches, resulted from necessity rather than from aesthetic ideal. Wood was the only material available for church construction and it did not lend itself to the smooth curves of the Byzantine style. The octagonal shape was a practical compromise.

CROSSES ATOP THE DOMES

Each dome is surmounted with a cross. Where the pagans saw the cross only as an instrument of punishment and, hence, as a symbol of shame, the early Christians regarded it as the symbol of Christ's victory, of saving power *(cf. 1 Co 1:18)*. The cross atop each dome in effect tells all passers-by: This is the house of

the Lord, a place of salvation.

The Greeks use an equilateral cross on the domes of their churches:

The Slavs use either the Greek cross or a three-barred cross:

One explanation for the three-barred Slav cross is that the top transverse bar is the title or inscription; the center, the regular cross bar; the bottom inclined at an angle, the foot-rest. The angled foot-rest may be seen as a distorted perspective.

Another explanation is that the top is St. Peter's cross; the center, the cross of Christ; and the bottom, the X-shaped cross of St. Andrew, the "apostle of the Slavs," crucified in spread-eagled fashion:

ORIENTATION OF CHURCHES

Since darkness seems to descend from the West with the setting of the sun, early Christians regarded the West as a place of darkness and evil, the place where Satan dwells. In contrast, since the sun rises out of the East to bring warmth and light to the darkened world, they considered the East as a place of goodness

and light, the place of Christ, Sun of justice and truth, the light of the world. They also believed that Christ ascended towards the East into heaven. For these reasons, they faced the West to renounce the devil at baptism, then turned towards the East to profess their allegiance to Christ. Whenever they prayed, they faced the East, so when they built special buildings for worship, they constructed them in such a way that the congregation would face the East.

Byzantines, both Greeks and Slavs, generally keep this ancient tradition, for their regulations insist on it. Even if the church had not been built that way, they would always refer to the right and left sides of the sanctuary as the southern and northern sides.

Church Interiors

Byzantine churches are divided into three parts: the vestibule, the nave, and the sanctuary.

THE VESTIBULE

The vestibule or inner porch (Slav *prytvor,* Greek *pronaos*) has retained only a trace of its former importance. As far back as the fourth and fifth centuries, those who were preparing to become Christians and public penitents were allowed into the vestibule and no further. Here, they were permitted to stay for the instructional part of the Divine Liturgy and were then dismissed before the Eucharistic sacrifice began. Here, part of the ancient all-night vigils used to take place and remnants of it can be seen today in the *litia* (Greek *lite*) of Solemn Vespers which still takes place in the vestibule. Here, too, the pre-baptismal exorcisms, the profession of faith, etc. took place before the candidates were led into the baptistry for the actual baptism, and this is where the same pre-baptismal rites take place today.

THE NAVE

The faithful worship in the nave. It is their place as members of Christ's Mystical Body, his kingdom on earth. As the word nave (from the Latin *navis,* Greek *naus,* a ship) suggests, the body of the church represents a ship conveying the faithful to the shores of heaven.

Here God touches and transforms the souls of the faithful with his words, his liturgy and sacraments, preparing them for

entry into the heavenly kingdom. Frescoes, mosaics, or paintings impress upon the faithful the idea that this is indeed "heaven on earth."

Christ Pantocrator, the heavenly Emperor, predominates over the sanctuary; he is surrounded by angels, prophets, patriarchs, apostles, and martyrs. In the apse, the Mother of God seems to gather up the prayers of God's people to offer them to her Son.

Since the church is the temple of sacrifice, the image of Christ as High Priest is also shown. Surrounding the Divine Priest is a cortege of heavenly spirits, bearing the instruments of his sacrificial death. The Old Law forerunners of this redeeming sacrifice are also pictured: Abel, Abraham and Melchisedech, together with some holy bishops of the New Law, Basil, Chrysostom, the two Gregorys, and the holy deacons Stephen and Lawrence.

All this began in the fourth or fifth century when Eastern Christians started painting the walls of the nave with biblical scenes to instruct the unlettered in sacred history. This is called the "narrative cycle." Other churches picture feasts in the church calendar (the "liturgical cycle"). Later, the two cycles were combined, with liturgical themes predominating.

Except in North America and a few other places, Byzantine churches have no pews; sometimes benches along the walls are provided for the aged and infirm. Byzantine regulations still forbid kneeling on Sundays and the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost — an unbroken tradition stemming from the Council of Nicea (Canon 20) in A.D. 325. Kneeling is a sign of penitence and joy of those days outweighs repentance.

Before the sanctuary platform stand one or more *proskynetaria,* small sloping stands on which is placed the icon of the church's patron or that of the saint or mystery commemorated in the liturgy of the day. Ukrainian churches, however, usually have only one somewhat larger but lower table, called the *tetrapod,* on which stand not only the customary icon, but two candles and a crucifix. On entering or before leaving the church, the faithful come up to venerate the icon; they first cross themselves and bow three times before they kiss it.

Also in the nave of the church are two or more "holy banners,"

that is, banners with holy pictures mounted on staffs. These are used in processions and serve not only as decorations but as reminders to the faithful that they are soldiers of Christ's church, doing battle with the forces of evil.

LIGHTS

Though there may be many other lights in the church, a large, ornate candelabrum is usually suspended in the front center of the nave. Lights are always used during the divine services, even on the brightest days. They have several symbolic meanings in this "heaven on earth": They show that the Lord, who dwells in heavenly light illumines the world with spiritual radiance; they express the worshippers' flame of love for God and his saints; they manifest the Church's spiritual joy and triumph.

The greater the joy of the Church in the Lord, the more solemn the service, the more lights are lit. All the lights are not used at the beginning of a service, but only at its most solemn moments, thus stressing their importance. To emphasize the coming of the Eucharistic Christ, more lights are used during the Divine Liturgy than any other service.

THE ICONOSTAS (ION)

The *iconostas (ion),* also known in Greek as the *templon,* is a richly ornamented screen or grating, covered with icons. It separates the sanctuary from the nave of the church, emphasizing the holiness of the sanctuary. The central double doors are called "Royal Doors" because the King of Glory comes forth through them at the Divine Liturgy to feed his flock with his words and with his own body and blood; they are also called the "Holy Doors." The unordained are never permitted to pass through them. Priests or deacons do so only during the divine services at the times appointed by the rubrics. On each side are doors used mostly by deacons.

The opening and closing of the Royal Doors at various times in the services represent the opening of the gates of Paradise. The entrances and exits of the priest also have their symbolism, e.g., Christ going out to preach to the people, to feed them at Communion, etc.

The images of the iconostas(ion) portray those who dwell in heaven, Christ in his glory surrounded by rows of saints. At the

last judgment, Christ together with ranks of angels and saints will come to judge the living and the dead, to separate those who will live eternally in heaven from those who will be excluded from it forever; hence, the iconostas(ion) represents the general judgment.

Greek iconostasia are generally lower than Russian or Ukranian. Icons are arranged in rows and tiers according to a definite plan. No set number of tiers is prescribed: they may range from one to six depending on the height of the iconostas, but the usual number is four. The bottom row has the *icon of the Saviour* immediately to the right of the Royal Doors (the south side), and next to it, the deacon's south door, then the *icon of the patron saint* of the church. Immediately to the left of the Royal Doors is the *icon of the Mother of God,* then the deacon's north door, finally the *icon of St. Nicholas of Myra*. If the patron of the church happens to be St. Nicholas, the icon of St. John the Baptist is placed there, while that of St. Nicholas is placed where the patron of the church should be.

Smaller churches have only this bottom row and *an image of the Last Supper* over the Royal Doors. The more elaborate iconostases of the larger churches have more rows or tiers, the second of which has the following arrangement: above the Royal Doors a large icon of the Last Supper; to its left and right, twelve icons depicting twelve *major feasts* of the Lord and his Mother. The icon of the Last Supper has this place of honor above the Royal Doors to remind the faithful that those wishing to gain entrance into the kingdom of heaven must be accounted worthy to partake of the Lord's Supper prepared behind those doors and given to the faithful in front of them.

In the third tier stand the icons of the *twelve apostles* with Christ as King and High Priest in the center.

The icons of the fourth tier are usually of the *major and minor prophets* of the Old Testament. Surmounting the iconostas and in its center is the *crucifix scene:* the crucifed Christ, his Mother, and St. John the Apostle standing by the cross.

On the Royal Doors themselves, which represent the gates of heaven, is the scene of the Annunciation, the prelude to man's redemption and salvation; also, icons of the *four*

evangelists who, like the archangel Gabriel, announced the Good News to the world. On the side deacon's doors are depicted either *angels,* messengers of God, sent to serve all who wish to attain salvation or *holy deacons,* earthly counterparts of angels, who have charge of the sanctuary into which those doors lead. Many Ukrainian churches have an icon of St. Stephen, the first deacon, on the north door and that of St. Lawrence or an angel on the south door.

Besides emphasizing the awesome sacredness of the sanctuary as the abode of Christ in the Eucharist, the iconostas(ion) "hides" this holy place (and all the sacred Mysteries taking place within it) from our unworthy gaze. To appreciate this role of "hiding" what is sacred, we must understand the devotion and spirituality which brought it about. The century following the early persecutions was a time of mass-conversions. Life-long Christians and the clergy, prompted by some abuses of the new converts, felt that the latter were not worthy to indulge in that familiarity with holy things to which the small suffering flocks had been entitled in the days of persecution.

In order to inculcate respect and awe for the Eucharist and other Holy Mysteries, many preachers (Cyril of Jerusalem, Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzus, etc.) began to use more and more fear-inducing words in describing them: "awful," "terrifying," and "most dread" (sometimes literally, "hair-raising"). The East had always associated the holy with the dangerous. To further stress the awesomeness and mystery of the Eucharist, veils were introduced to hide and separate it from the congregation; so were cancelli, trellis walls of marble, some three to five feet high.

The solid partition, characteristic of the Byzantine iconostas (ion), took centuries to develop. The present carefully prescribed arrangement in Slav churches seems to have been introduced in the fourteenth century in the richly wooded areas around Novgorod where the inhabitants were fine carvers and icon painters. Their deep love of icons probabley led them to give the iconostas(ion) an additonal purpose — as a place to hang icons. The desire for greater adornment spread throughout Russia and the Ukraine so that, within a century or two, the Slav iconostas(ion) became almost exactly what it is today.

The notion of the awesome Godhead, the Heavenly Emperor, the supreme Lawgiver and Judge, combined with that of the repentant humiliation of fallen man striving for purification, still stands behind the idea of the iconostas(ion).

THE SANCTUARY AS THE HOLY PLACE, THE HOLY OF HOLIES

Byzantine Christians usually refer to the sanctuary as the "Holy Place" or the "Holy of Holies," because it is the most holy part of the church, being the dwelling-place of the Eucharistic Christ. It also symbolizes the sacred places sanctified by Christ's presence while on earth: where he preached to the people, where he performed miracles, where he suffered, died, arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. It is elevated from the rest of the church by at least one step, and must be built at its eastern end (so that the congregation faces east). The sanctuary floor is extended beyond the iconostas(ion) into the body of the church: this is called the *solea(s)*. At both ends of this area, near the walls, are the choirs; each choir has an *analogion* or lectern for reading the lessons.

Standing against the north side of the sanctuary is a small table; the Slavs call it *proskmedijnyk* or *zhetvennyk,* the Greeks, *proskomide* or *prothesis*. That is where the Holy Gifts of bread and wine are prepared for the Eucharistic Liturgy. Against the south wall stands a similar table where the vestments, liturgical books and sacred vessels are kept. The Slavs call it the *diakonnyk,* the Greeks, *diakonikon*.

Along the east wall of the sanctuary, behind the altar, stands the bishop's throne on a raised platform. It symbolizes the throne of the King of Glory (whom the bishop represents when he sits there). On each side of the throne are seats for the other clergy; these represent the apostles and their successors. This seating arrangement for the bishop and clergy can be traced to the first churches remodeled from private homes in the fourth century, while its symbolism seems to date from apostolic times, for at the beginning of the second century, St. Ignatius of Antioch mentions the bishop "as presiding in the place of God" and the priests "in the place of assembly of the apostles" ("Epist. to the Magnesians," 6).

At each side of the throne are placed the sacramental fans

(Slav *ripidy*, Greek *ripidia, hexapteryga)*, representing the six-winged seraphim; these are used by the deacons to fan the Holy Gifts during the Eucharistic Liturgy. The use of sacramental fans goes back to the fourth or fifth century Syrian churches (cf. "Apost. Const.," VIII, 12).

THE HOLY TABLE OR ALTAR

The Holy Table or altar, which is always cubic, stands in the middle of the sanctuary and represents God's throne in heaven. It also symbolizes the tomb of Christ, since his Eucharistic body is placed on it. This symbolism extends to the altar-cloths which drape over the sides to the ground: the topmost cloth (Slav *inditia*, Greek *ependysis, endyton*, or *ephaploma*) should be of silk or some other rich, brilliant material, for it represents the glory of God's throne; under this is a large linen cloth (Slav *sratchitza* or *katasarka*, Greek *katasarkion)*, symbolizing the winding sheet in which Christ's body was wrapped. Under these cloths, at each of the four corners, lies a piece of cloth *(hyphasma)* on which is embroidered the name or symbol of an evangelist.

The tabernacle (Slav *kyvot* or *kovcheg*, Greek *artophorion*) is set on the center of the altar. It should be constructed in form of a small church or tomb, but never so large as to impede the liturgical action. The Holy Sacrament is reserved here for the communion of the sick and for the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts during Great Lent. Instead of a tabernacle on the altar, some churches have a suspended dove made of precious metal in which the Sacrament is kept.

On the front center of the altar lies an *antimension*. This is a rectangular, linen or silken cloth with the picture of Christ in the tomb and the four evangelists; sewn onto the antimension are relics of some saint or martyr. This corresponds to the altar stone in Latin churches. Other relics may be placed under or in the altar itself in a specially prepared reliquary.

The origin of this custom may be seen in the early Christian practice of celebrating the Eucharistic Sacrifice on the tombs of martyrs in the catacombs, perhaps in accordance with Rev. 6:9, and serves to remind the faithful that, after Christ himself, the

blood of the martyrs is the foundation of the Church. Though the name "antimension" appears only in the twelfth century, its existence can be traced at least to the fifth century. St. Theodore the Studite (757-826), for example, calls it a portable altar made of fabric.

Another piece of linen or fine material, equivalent to the Latin corporal, is the *iliton* or *eileton*; this is unfolded during the Divine Liturgy before the sacred vessels are placed on it. The symbolism of the *iliton* is twofold: it represents the swaddling clothes with which the baby Jesus was wrapped; also the shroud in which Christ's body was wrapped in the tomb (which in turn is represented by the altar). If a sponge is used to wipe off particles from the *diskos* (paten) into the chalice, it too is kept on the altar.

The Holy Gospel Book rests on the front-center of the altar (on the folded *iliton* and the antimension) to show that God himself is mystically present through his word. Beside it lies a hand cross. The candles on the altar typify the light of Christ shining on the world. A seven-branched candlestick, symbol of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, is usually placed behind the altar and sometimes, also a large processional cross. Also placed on the altar during certain parts of pontifical services are the double and triple-branched candlesticks, called the *dikiri(on)* and *trikiri(on)*, representing the two natures in Christ (human and divine) and the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. The bishop imparts some of his blessings with them.

Nothing else is allowed on the altar, not even flowers.

Some churches have a canopy over the altar, symbolizing the heavens spread out above the earth — above the hallowed ground upon which Christ offered his supreme sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Basic Meaning of the Parish Church

To Byzantine Christians, the parish church is truly the house of the Lord, "heaven on earth." Here the signs of his presence and action are everywhere. Here Christ touches them. Here he teaches them divine truth. Here he wipes away their tears, takes

away their worries, solves their troubles. Here he heals their bruised spirit, feeds their souls, comes to them in the sacrament of his love, performing the greatest miracle of all — preparing them to live in his embrace forever in the heaven above.

PART FIVE

THE HOLY MYSTERY OF SHARING THE LIFE OF GOD

Chapter XX

The Holy Spirit

Artists have a problem picturing the Holy Spirit. Since they cannot paint a spirit, they settle for the next best thing: a symbolic dove, or tongues of fire. The basis is scriptural *(Lk 3:22, Ac 2:3)*. For too many people, the Holy Spirit is only this: some kind of dove, or an equally impersonal, eternally hovering flame — hardly anything to set anyone afire with love..

We should think of the Holy Spirit as a divine Person, equal in personality to Father and Son.

Being a person of the Holy Trinity, truly and eternally God, the Holy Spirit is the *parakletos* Christ promised to the apostles *(Jn 14:16)*. *Parakletos* has various meanings, all of which are applicable to the good Spirit: counselor, advocate, intercessor, defender, protector, one who helps and supports. Jesus discharged all these offices before his ascension into heaven. When he told the apostles he would send them the Holy Spirit, he did not say he would send them *the* Paraclete but *another* Paraclete *(Jn 14:16, 14:26)*, who would take his place at their side to help them remember the truth, to lead them to a deeper knowledge of it, to preach it and, finally, to give them the strength needed for the coming trials and persecutions. This work itself brings out the personal character of the Spirit.

The Spirit in the Old Testament

The Old Testament speaks of the "Spirit of Yahweh" (the Spirit of God); the New Testament uses the term "Holy Spirit." The meaning, however, is the same, and so is his work. The Spirit, for example, is pictured as the divine power or the giver of life *(e.g., Gn 1:2, 2:7, Ps 33:6, 104:29f.)*. He equips chosen individuals fo fulfill special roles, not only prophets, but men such as Joseph, Abraham, Moses, Gideon, etc.

In general, the Old Testament prepared the people both for the coming of the Messiah and for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Through Isaiah *(44:3)*, God promised, *"I will pour my*

spirit on your descendants, my blessing on your children.'' And through Ezekiel *(36:26-28): ''I shall give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you . . . I shall put my spirit in you, and make you keep my laws and sincerely respect my observances . . . You shall be my people and I will be your God.''*

St. Peter's discourse in Acts *(2:16-21)* identifies Pentecost as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy *(2:28-29): ''After this, I will pour out my spirit on all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men see visions. Even on the slaves, men and women, will I pour out my spirit in those days.''*

What the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament would really mean can be seen from his presence in the coming Messiah, the Christ: *''For there is a child before us, a son given to us and dominion is laid on his shoulders; and this is the name they give him: Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace. Wide is his dominion in a peace that has no end for the throne of David . . . A shoot springs from the stock of Jesse, a scion thrusts from his roots: on him the spirit of Yahweh rests, a spirit of wisdom and insight, a spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh'' (Is 9:5-7, 11:1-2).* Here the Old Testament clearly outlines the work of the Holy Spirit, but nowhere does it reveal the fact of his being a distinct Person from the Father: this was left to the New.

The Holy Spirit in the Gospels

Right from the beginning, the Gospels speak of the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ROLE IN THE INCARNATION At the Annunciation, the angel told Mary how she, a virgin, would conceive: *''The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow'' (Lk 1:35).* And so it happened, Mary *''was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit'' (Mt 1:18)* and Joseph learned of it from an angel, *''she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit'' (Mt 1:20).*

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS REVEALER AND GIVER OF PROPHECY At the Baptist's circumcision, *''his father Zechariah was filled with the*

Holy Spirit'' and spoke the prophecy that has been known ever since as the canticle of Zechariah. *(Lk 1:67-79).*

The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he set eyes on the Christ. It came true at the presentation: *''Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said: 'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace . . .' and prophesied to Mary his mother, 'You can see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected — and a sword will pierce you own soul too — so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare' ''(Lk 2:27, 34-35).*

When Jesus readied the twelve for their mission, he told them they would be persecuted for his sake. When arrested, however, they were not to be anxious: *''Do not worry about how to speak or what to say; what you are to say will be given to you when the time comes; because it is not you who will be speaking; the Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you'' (Mt 10:19-20).*

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A DISTINCT PERSON OF THE TRINITY. For the first time in history, the mystery of the three distinct Persons in the one Godhead was revealed at the baptism of Christ: *''While Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily shape, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on you,'' (Lk3:21-22).*

John the Baptist, who saw it all, declared: *''I saw the Spirit coming down on him from heaven like a dove and resting on him. I did not know him myself, but he who sent me to baptize with water had said to me 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and rest is the one who is going to baptize with the Holy Spirit.' Yes, I have seen and I am the witness that he is the Chosen One of God'' (Jn 1:32-34).*

When Nicodemus stole in to see Jesus one night, Jesus told him among other things: *''Unless a man is born through water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God'' (Jn 3:5).* Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, he gave the apostles the authority and power to effect this spiritual rebirth through the

three Persons of the Godhead: *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:18-19).*

Pentecost

On Pentecost day, the apostles met in one room and *"suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Ac 2:1-4).*

The results were spectacular: from timid, fearful men the apostles became bold, stouthearted, filled with courage and conviction. Immediately they began preaching in foreign languages about Christ crucified, about his rising from the dead and about repentance — and this openly, in the streets. Speaking for all eleven, Peter's sincere reasoning made a deep impression. The power of the Holy Spirit can be seen from the number of conversions — about three thousand on that very day.

A Promise Fulfilled

The coming of the Holy Spirit fulfilled the promise Jesus had made to his loved ones at the Last Supper. He had told them he would not leave them orphans but would send another Paraclete-Advocate, the Spirit of truth: *"I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you for ever, that Spirit of truth" (Jn 14:16); "but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you" (Jn 14:26),* and again, *"unless I go, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I do go, I will send him to you" (Jn 16:7).*

From these words we see clearly that the Holy Spirit is indeed a distinct Person from the Father and the Son, and is sent by them. This sending by the Father and the Son also indicated the immanent origin of the Spirit.

Greek theology teaches a procession from the Father *through*

the Son, in such a way that the Son is understood not merely as a channel, but also as an active principle. There is no opposition between this and the Latin creed, which indicates that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. When the Greek creed mentions the Father only, this in no way excludes the Son. It is a matter of emphasis, not a difference of doctrine. The Greek formula of the Holy Spirit proceeding "from the Father through the Son" has been used by many of the Eastern saints and Fathers of the Church: St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Epiphanius, St. Cyril of Alexandria, as well as St. Athanasius and St. Maximos the Confessor. Byzantine theologians stress that the Father is the origin of both the Son and Holy Spirit, but they do not deny that the Father and the Son are one principle of the Spirit. The polemics which later abounded on both sides could have been avoided if each side had listened, and prayerfully tried to understand the other's point of view instead of throwing anathemas at each other.

The whole question seems to be a vain verbal disputation. Since no one understands the inner workings of the Trinity, no one can affirm categorically how the Holy Spirit proceeds from the other Person or Persons. There is a very simple solution to this question which has caused such bitter exchanges between East and West: it is for the faithful to say, "In whatever way it pleases the Holy Spirit to proceed from the Godhead, that I believe."

The Indwelling Spirit

When Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, he told his chosen ones they already knew him *"because he is with you, he is in you" (Jn 14:17).* Yet in the same talk, he clearly indicated that he himself and the Father would also dwell in each of them: *"If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him" (Jn 14:23).*

At baptism, God begins to dwell in the soul through the Holy Spirit. God the Son became man through the same Spirit. Because God himself is in or "indwells" the recipients of baptism, we can thereby truly speak of them as temples, as St. Paul did when he wrote to the Corinthians, *"Didn't you realize*

that you were God's temple and that the Spirit of God was living among you?'' (1 Co 3:16).

At confirmation-chrismation, the degree of participation in that divine life is increased to full maturity. A baby, though a human being, is not what an adult is; analogously, the newly baptized, though full Christians, do not share God's life or its attributes as intimately as do confirmed Christians. The difference is the same as that between new-born and mature life, between what the apostles were before Pentecost and after it. Confirmation-chrismation is the personal Pentecost of individual Christians, preparing them for life in the world, for loyal service to God. Furthermore, this divine life in the soul, called sanctifying grace, increases with the worthy reception of the sacraments and with every good work. *''Whoever keeps his commandments lives in God and God lives in him. We know that he lives in us by the Spirit that he has given us'' (1 Jn 3:24).*

All who participate in God's life (who enjoy sanctifying grace) have a habitual facility for doing good. These habits we call virtues, and they are the supernatural counterparts of the good habits we can possess naturally. Faith, hope and charity correspond to our natural knowldge, trust and love of God; the main moral virtues strengthen and elevate our naturally acquired prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice.

Even with these supernatural virtues as counterparts of our natural good instincts of mind and will, we may need further help to remain in God's love. We may have God's life in us, but we are still fallible humans. The Holy Spirit provides special help with his gifts.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The prophet Isaiah *(11:2-3)* listed the gifts of the Spirit. These referred directly to the Messiah, but indirectly to anyone receiving the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

WISDOM enables our minds to evaluate everything in relation to God and our salvation; it gives us a true sense of priorities from God's point of view. People often use the words wisdom and education indiscriminately, but sometimes education has little to do with wisdom, which enables us to love and cherish what is

right, what will make us truly happy for time and eternity.

UNDERSTANDING, being the Holy Spirit's remedy for dullness, enlightens our mind to grasp divine truths easily and deeply. This, too, has little to do with study and education. The apostles, for example, were not highly educated, nor did they have any extraordinary genius or talent. After they had received the Holy Spirit and his gift of understanding, all the teachings of Jesus became clear to them. Their profound insight into the revealed truths was so great that it surprised Jew and Gentile alike.

KNOWLEDGE, the very opposite of ignorance, helps us to perceive divine truths and explain them to others. Even after much studying and reading, it may be difficult to discern what is the best for our soul; this gift helps us to decide with certainty.

COUNSEL helps us not to act rashly but prudently and correctly in matters concerning salvation, our own and that of others. It inspires or advises us to choose correctly what to do or not to do, what means to select and how to use them. This gift is our interior guide.

FORTITUDE gives us the courage and will-power necessary for carrying out whatever God wants of us, whatever is conducive to our spiritual welfare. It helps us to overcome the difficulties of a new career, a new apostolate, a new state of life, or the trials of sickness, opposition and temptation.

PIETY disposes us to love and reverence to God as our lovable Father, and our neighbors as children of God. It prompts us to serve and worship him as children worship a father, and to honor and serve others, especially parents and relatives.

FEAR OF THE LORD makes us afraid of offending God by sin, not because we fear his punishment but because he is so loving, because he is our Father and we are his children. We shun evil because we do not want to offend the Giver of so many good gifts.

Charismatic Gifts

St. Paul tells the Corinthians, *"I should like everyone to be like me, but everyone has his own particular gifts from God, one with a gift for one thing and another with a gift for the opposite" (1 Co 7:7).*

As no two people are identical in physical characteristics and energy, so also no two people are identical in spiritual vitality and virtue. The fiery Paul was not the gentle John, nor the golden-mouthed Chrysostom like the meek Seraphim of Sarov. Each one of us has his own gifts, his own abilities. The Holy Spirit usually builds upon the natural, and each one of us participates in God's perfections in his own way. In one, it may be meekness, in another, chastity; in one, it may be compassion and mercy, in another, justice, sobriety, etc.

The same Holy Spirit imparts other spiritual gifts, called charisms, which are given to individuals for the benefit of the Christian community. These, too, vary with different people, depending upon the service to be rendered. *''There is a variety of gifts,''* says St. Paul, *''but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose. One may have the gift of preaching with wisdom given him by the Spirit; another may have the gift of preaching instruction given him by the same Spirit; and another the gift of faith given by the same Spirit; another again the gift of healing, through this one Spirit; one, the power of miracles; another the gift of tongues and another the ability to interpret them. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit who distributes different gifts to different people just as he chooses'' (1 Co 12: 4-11).*

The value of these gifts depends upon their usefulness to the community and is to be judged accordingly *(cf. Co chap. 14).* All of them are intended to lead to peace and union in the Church, not to division *(1 Co 12:22-26).* St. Paul uses the analogy of the human body and its parts, every part working for the benefit of the whole. Any talent which does not produce such fruits is not of the Holy Spirit, *''since God is not a God of disorder but of peace'' (1 Co 14:32).*

The Holy Spirit in the Church

When Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to the apostles, he told them the Spirit would remain with them forever. *(Jn 14:16).*

On Pentecost, the Spirit came, and the Church of the New Covenant was revealed. The early Fathers proclaimed that the Church and the Holy Spirit were inseparable. St. Irenaeus, for example, writes: "Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and every kind of grace" ("Against the Heresies," III, 24,1). St. Cyril of Jerusalem called the Spirit "the Guardian and Sanctifier of the Church" ("Cat. Lecture" 18,13).

The Church is the Body of Christ animated by the Holy Spirit. In that sense, we may speak of the Holy Spirit as the "soul" of the Church. As every part and member of the living human body has a different importance and function, so does every member of the Church, the Body of Christ. The good Spirit is present and operates in all the parts and members — in less important members through the ministry of others more important, all for the good of the whole Body.

To the most important member of the Church, the successor of Peter, the visible head of the Body, the Holy Spirit gives the charism of the Church's infallibility. To the successors of the apostles, the bishops and priests, he gives the charism of preaching divine truths and imparting divine life to souls through baptism, confirmation-chrismation, forgiveness through sacramental absolution, and nourishment through the Eucharist, etc.

One of the most important functions performed by the Church under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was to determine the list of canonical books of the Bible, that is, to declare officially which scriptural books were divinely inspired.

Devotion to the Holy Spirit

All the perfections and operations of the Godhead are common to all three Persons of the Trinity. Yet, to the Holy Spirit are attributed the works of love. Love, in turn, is manifested especially in doing good. The prayer to the Holy Spirit, so familiar to every Byzantine Christian because it begins almost every Church service, summarizes the Spirit's mission:

"Heavenly King, Paraclete, Spirit of truth, everywhere present and permeating all things, Treasury of blessings and Giver of life, come

and dwell within us, and cleanse us from every stain and save our souls, O Gracious One."

Being God, equal to the Father and Son, the Holy Spirit is King of heaven, King of all. Paraclete literally means "one called in" as helper, pleader, defender, advocate. The Slavs prefer to call him Consoler. He is all these in one. As Jesus told his apostles, he is the *"Spirit of truth,"* who would teach them all things and remind them of all that was taught by Jesus *(cf. Jn 14:26)*. He still guides the Church unto the fullness of truth *(Jn 16;13)*. Like the Father and the Son, he is God omnipresent, sustaining all things in being, including us. Every good gift, every blessing comes to us from him, so he is addressed as the very Treasury of blessings. Through him, the Father gives life to us who were dead in sin, till at the end he will revive in Christ even our mortal bodies *(cf. Rm. 8:10-11)*. He is indeed the Giver of life.

The doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our souls is expressed in the petition, "come and dwell within us." While remaining distinct from us, the Holy Spirit accomplishes our justification, our deification. The forgiveness of grave sins is an essential part of our spiritual rebirth, and, hence, of our eternal salvation. Sin is really destroyed, but not necessarily every stain or effect of sin. The final plea in this prayer is for cleansing of "every stain," so that nothing remains to mar the supernatural beauty of the soul. It is a plea for perfect purification.

In Byzantine rituals, almost every blessing and consecration is an *epiclesis,* a "calling upon" the Holy Spirit to come and "dwell" in whatever is being blessed, thereby sanctifying it.

Pentecost Commemorated

The Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles on the Jewish Pentecost *(Ac 2:1)*, the second most important of the great Jewish feasts. It was celebrated on the fiftieth day from *"the day after the sabbath"* of the Passover *(cf. Lv 23:11);* its name meaning fiftieth, was adopted from the Greek-speaking Jews. Originally, this was the harvest festival marking the end of Passover-time, but later it commemorated the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. To mark the occasion, the Jews decorated their synagogues and homes with green branches, grass and flowers.

The house where the apostles assembled on that first Christian Pentecost was probably decorated in the same way. Byzantine Christians still decorate their churches and homes with greenery and flowers on Pentecost — an unbroken tradition stemming from the Jewish practice. In some localities, the faithful hold green branches or saplings during church services. Because of the greenery, many call the feast and the next two days the "Green Holidays."

According to some liturgists, the saplings and greenery, signs of nature and rebirth or self-renewal in the springtime, symbolize our spiritual rebirth or renewal through the power of the Holy Spirit; according to others, the green saplings and branches represent the fruit-tree of the Holy Spirit, bearing his gifts.

The Pentecostal services, especially the All-night Vigil and Solemn Vespers, show the divinity of the Holy Spirit, one in Being, honor and glory with the Father and the Son.

CHAPTER XXI

Sharing God's Life

As descendants of Adam and Eve, we lost God when they sinned. Christ's redeeming death made it possible for us to regain God: *"As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rm 5:19).* Christ enabled us to regain our lost paradise but it would never be as easy because of the other effects of their sin: our nature became warped, our mind became darkened, our will weakened, our flesh no longer inclined to obey higher dictates.

These dire effects made St. Paul cry out about his own condition: *"This seems to be the rule, that every single time I want to do good it is something evil that comes to hand. In my inmost self I dearly love God's Law, but I can see that my body follows a different law that battles against the law which my reason dictates. This is what makes me a prisoner of that law of sin which lives inside my body. What a wretched man I am!" (Rm 7:21-24).*

God's Help Is Necessary

We need God's help for everything that is profitable for our salvation, be it thinking, willing or accomplishing anything. The Lord stated plainly that without him we can do nothing *(cf. Jn 15:4-6)*, and Paul writes to the Philippians: *"Work for your salvation 'in fear and trembling.' It is God for his own loving purpose, who puts both the will and the action into you" (Ph 2:12-13).* In short, we are not qualified *"in ourselves to claim anything as our own work: all our qualifications come from God" (2 Co 3:5).* Our salvation is supernatural, above our nature; hence the means to attain it must also be supernatural. We can no more attain eternal life by purely natural means than we can think with our hands or reason with our feet.

Man left to himself, for example, could not get to know the essential truths of faith without erring; much less was he capable of knowing the entire system of God's truths. Human history shows that man left to himself can stoop to the worship of many different

objects — crocodiles, cats, bulls, the sun, moon and stars. This darkness of mind resulted from original sin.

Original sin has not altogether blotted out the light of reason and free will, for St. Paul says that even pagans *"who never heard of the Law"* are *"led by reason to do what the Law commands" (Rm 2:14)*. However, left to themselves *"the more they called themselves philosophers, the more stupid they grew, until they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for a worthless imitation, for the image of mortal man, of birds, quadrupeds and reptiles. That is why God left them to their filthy enjoyments and practices with which they dishonor their own bodies.... That is why God has abandoned them to degrading passion" (Rm 1:22-26)*.

God Guarantees Sufficient Help

God understands our weakened condition and guarantees us enough help to counter every evil effect resulting from our first parents' sin: *"You can trust God no to let you be tried beyond your strength, and with any trial he will give you a way out of it and the strength to bear it" (1 Co 10:12-13*. So none of us can claim that anything was beyond our strength.

God moves, helps, in many ways: sometimes through externals such as the Gospels, the good example of others, faithful friends, good magazine articles, even good TV programs; sometimes he moves us internally by enlightening our mind and inspiring our will to do good and avoid evil. Many call these helps "actual graces."

Man Can Reject God's Help

God never takes away man's free will. Man can choose; he can indeed reject God's help. Though God gives sufficient help to overcome all temptation, man can withhold his cooperation and render that help ineffectual. The inhabitants of Jerusalem are a classic example of refusal to cooperate with God's help: *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem,"* Jesus cried out in anguish, *"you that kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you refused" (Mt 23:37)*. They did not

repent and the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Our Freedom Remains Intact

God will never force us to love him. His help will never be so overwhelming as to destroy our freedom of will. Scripture characterizes the just man as one *"who has had the power to sin and has not sinned, to wrong another and not done it" (Si 31:10).* Such a person voluntarily followed the inspiration of grace, since he could have done the opposite. Besides, the Scriptures repeatedly exhort us to do good and avoid evil. Such exhortations would have been useless had we not been free.

Different Kinds of Life

A running cat differs from a stone. The one has life, the other does not. There are different kinds of life, too. A cow is quite different from the grass it eats.

In general, there is plant, animal, and human life. Plants are living since they can grow and reproduce themselves. Animals not only grow and reproduce themselves; they can also feel, remember, and move from place to place. Animal life, therefore, is superior to plant life. In addition to animal functions, human beings have spiritual minds, intellects, with which they can think, understand, and reason (solve problems, etc.). Theirs is a higher grade of life than that of animals.

Above the human level are angels or pure spirits whose intelligence is far superior to ours.

The highest perfection of life is in God. His activity is not distinct from his being; his knowledge, his justice, his mercy, etc., are his essence.

Though we know there are very different kinds of life, the English language has only one word to express it, "life." The Greek, in which the New Testament (except Matthew) was written, has three. *Bios* refers to biological life. Breath as a sign of life is expressed by *psyche*. The highest, most intensive kind of life is *zoe*. The New Testament authors used the term *zoe* exclusively to express the supernatural life that God gives us through Christ. Many times, the Gospels and St. Paul use the

combination *zoe aionios,* "eternal life." The same *zoe* we possess on earth will continue into eternity. This *zoe* is sharing in God's life. In the words of Peter, "*you will be able to share the divine nature*" *(2 P 1:4).*

This sharing in God's life can be expressed in many ways: the "indwelling of the Holy Spirit" (cf. above, p. 212), "grace of the Holy Spirit," "supernatural life," "habitual" or "sanctifying grace," "new life" (from the sinful state), or "deification." All these terms express the same reality but they focus on different aspects of it.

Our sharing in God's life is not part of our nature as human beings; that is why it is called supernatural (above nature), just as moving from place to place by walking or running in no way belongs to the nature of a plant. Indeed, it is a free gift of God — whence its name "grace" (from the Latin *gratia,* the Greek *charis*, a favor, a gift).

Origin of Our Sharing in God's Life

Our natural life begins through generation and birth. As descendants of Adam and Eve, each of us was born in original sin (see above, pp. 79ff.), without God's life. Through baptism, we are born again spiritually, that is, we regain the life of God. The Master hmself told Nicodemus: "*I tell you most solemnly, unless a man is born through water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*" *(Jn 3:5).* Through baptism God "*has taken us out of the power of darkness and created a place for us in the kingdom of the Son that he loves, and in him, we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins*" *(Col 1:13-14).* "*It was for no reason except his own compassion that he saved us, which he has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our Saviour. He did this so that we should be justified by his grace, to become heirs looking forward to inheriting eternal life*" *(Tt 3:5-7).*

Baptism presupposes the profession of faith, made personally by adults, or through sponsors in the case of infants: "*By believing from the heart you are made righteous; by confessing with your lips you are saved*" *(Rm 10:10).* "*If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him, and he in God....*

God is love and anyone who lives in love lives in God and God lives in him'' (1 Jn 4:15-16).

We Can Loose God's Life

Even after receiving God's life in baptism, we can lose it through the deliberate viciousness of grave sin. This is what the Lord calls the *''death of a soul'' (Mt 10:28),* because it extinguishes the life of God in it. This is what Paul warned against *(1 Co 10:12),* and he lists the kinds of sinners who will not inherit the kingdom of God: *''People of immoral lives, idolaters, adulterers, catamites, sodomites, thieves, usurers, drunkards, slanderers and swindlers'' (1 Co 6:9-10).*

The loss of God in us does not usually entail the loss of faith. Every grave sin is against charity, but only one grave sin is against faith: unbelief. So we may still believe firmly after grave sin, but we are not enlivened by charity flowing from the life of God.

In his goodness, God does not forget even those who have separated themselves from him, even repeatedly, through grave sin. To these, too, he gives enough help to keep his commandments (hence, to avoid further sin) and to be converted to him. We know this from the many warnings of the Scriptures, admonishing sinners to avoid further sin, to do penance and come back to him. Such an obligation could not be imposed without the help necessary for accomplishing these things — man's natural strength alone is not enough. But God reassures everyone through Peter: *''He is being patient with you all, wanting nobody to be lost and everybody to be brought to change his ways'' (2 P 3:9).*

Though lesser sins do not separate us from God and salvation, they do diminish our participaton in divine life and all that goes with it. Through venial sins, we become less inclined to do good works and less open to God's inspirations. As repeated good acts beget good habits, so do repeated venial sins beget evil habits which gradually lead to grave sin, the total separation from God's life.

Virtues and Gifts Which Go with God's Life

When God comes to us, he does not come empty-handed: he

brings us many virtues and gifts, many of his own attributes. Virtues are good habits or habitual powers to do good, to enable us to act far beyond our natural capacity. Three of the most important ones, faith, hope and love, God infuses, pours into our soul — unlike other habits which we acquire by repeated practice. These are called "theological" because they have God himself as the object of their actions.

By the gifts of faith, God enables us to share in his wisdom so that, offering full submission of our intellect and will, we may know him as he is and accept his revelation: *"Only faith can guarantee the blessings that we hope for, or prove the existence of the realities that at present remain unseen" (Heb 11:1).*

Knowing God's power, goodness and faithfulness, we receive the ability to trust God with unshakable confidence that we will obtain everything he promised: this is the virtue of hope.

Paul clearly indicates the supremacy of love: *"There are three things that last: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love" (1 co 13:13).* This virtue inclines our will to love God for himself. It is not only the greatest of the three theological virtues but of all other virtues as well.

Without love nothing in this life avails: *"If I have all the eloquence of men or of angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and if I have faith in all its fulness, to move mountains, but without love, then I am nothing at all. If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and if I even let them take my body to burn it, but am without love, it will do me no good whatever" (1 Co 13:1-3).*

And Paul goes on to tell us some of the things love includes: *"Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude of selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes" (1 Co 13:4-7).*

Of the other virtues, four are "cardinal": justice fortitude, temperance, and prudence. Flowing from true wisdom *(cf. Ws 8:7)*,

these are the main natural virtues, natural because they can be acquired by repeated practice and do not necessarily lead to the friendship and eternal life with God. God can, however, elevate and transform them into expressions of divine love. If my love for God, for example, helps me to moderate my appetite for alcoholic drink, divine love elevates my resultant sobriety to the supernatural level.

In coming to a soul, the Holy Spirit also offers his gifts: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord. Isaiah *(11:2-3)* prophesied that the coming Redeemer would have these seven gifts. The Fathers have consistently taught that these same gifts are given to all who have God's life in their souls.

After listing the wicked results of self-indulgence, Paul tells us that *''What the Spirit brings is very different: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, and self-control'' (Ga 5:22-23).* Called the fruits of the Holy Spirit, they are in a sense a foretaste of eternal happiness.

Increasing Our Participation in God's Life

God does live in those who love him. The night before he died, Jesus told the apostles: *''If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him'' (Jn 14:23).* The Holy Spirit will also dwell in him as the Advocate, *''whom the Father will send in my name'' (Jn 14:26).*

Western theologians generally speak of God's indwelling in the souls of the just, as ''the state of grace,'' ''justification,'' or ''sanctification''. The Eastern Fathers and church writers prefer to call it *theosis* (or *theopoiesis),* ''deification,'' the gradual transformation of the soul into divine nature. The whole doctrine of the Mystical Body is based on this concept. The process, begun at baptism, continues in time and in eternity. God not merely dwells in us, he also transforms us, enabling us to partake of his divine nature.

The words of Peter are explicit: *''In making these gifts, he has given us the guarantee of something very great and wonderful to come: through them you will be able to share the divine nature....''*

(2 P 1:4). Deification, the union of man with God, is very real. Clement of Alexandria, calls it man's ''assimilation to God'' (''Stromata,'' IV, 23). In writing about the incarnation of Christ, Origen asserts that ''from him began the union of the divine with the human nature, so that the human, by communion with the divine might rise to be divine, not in Jesus alone, but in all who believe and enter upon the life which Jesus taught'' (''Against Celsus,'' III, 28). Athanasius teaches that the Son of God became man that we humans might become God'' (''On the Incarnation of the Word,'' 54).

In one of the most beautiful passages ever penned by St. Basil, he writes that the Holy Spirit is ''in essence simple, in powers various; wholly present in each one and wholly present everywhere; impassively divided, yet shared without losing any of his entirety, like a sunbeam whose kindly light falls on him who enjoys it as though it shone for him alone, while in fact it shines upon earth, sea, and air. In the same way, the Spirit is present in each of those who receives him as if each recipient were the only one, and yet he pours out total and sufficient grace upon all men. He is enjoyed by all who share him, in the measure of their individual capacity.

''Shining upon those that are cleansed of every stain, he makes them spiritual by communion with himself. As bright, transparent bodies, when a sunbeam falls upon them, become brilliant too and shine with a fresh brightness of their own, so souls in whom the Spirit dwells, through his illumination become spiritual and send forth their grace to others. From this Source comes foreknowledge, understanding of mysteries, perception of what is hidden, the distribution of good gifts, a heavenly citizenship, a place in the chorus of angels, joy without end, abiding in God, likening God, and, highest of all, being made God!'' (''On the Holy Spirit,'' I, 22 and 23).

CHAPTER XXII

Preserving Life in God

A Jewish lawyer once stepped up and pointedly asked Jesus, *"Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"* The answer was clear; it was simple: *"You must love the lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as youself." Without quibbling, Jesus assured him, "Do this and life is yours." (Lk 10:25).*

The "Didache" (one of the earliest known books of catechetical instructions, parts of which date back to the first century) puts the same teaching into its first lesson: "Now, the Way of Life is this: first, love the God who made you; secondly, your neighbor as yourself" (I,2).

"On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets" (Mt 22:40); so do the Ten Commandments: the first three relate to the love of God; the last seven, to the love of neighbor. If I really love God, I will do what he wants by worshipping him and him alone, by rendering him homage and by respecting his name. If I really love my neighbor, I will not harm him, his property, his good name or his rights, either by thought or deed.

The Ten Commandments are the "natural law," the law *engraved on the heart (cf. Rm 2:15).* They are based on the very nature of things and on the way we ourselves are made. Though we can get to know these dictates of natural law by our reason alone, God spelled them out explicitly to Moses on Mount Sinai *(cf. Ex 20:1-17, 24:12).*

Being natural law, the commandments hold true today as they did before the time of Christ. Heeding their dictates means happiness: disobedience spells injury and disaster not only to ourselves but to others, not only in eternity but right here on earth. Sin always carries its own punishment, as Moses warned, *"your sin will find you out" (Nb 32:23).*

Today, as they did long ago, passion, weakness and malice warp man's interpretation of the natural law and distort his

reason. Modern man, however, camouflages his disobedience under more plausible terms. He disguises pornography, promiscuity and adultery as self-expression, self-fulfillment; dishonesty in business and government as sophistication; abortion and euthanasia (''mercy killing''), as merciful or compassionate procedures; divorce and artificial birth-control as humane considerations; in short, license and permissiveness as freedom!

Judging by God's Standards — Conscience

We must strive to see as God sees, to judge as God judges, to love as God loves. Everything we do, say, or think should reflect what God wants, not what biased self-love or the prejudices one's community dictate: *''Do not model yourselves on the behavior of the world around you, but let your behavior change, modeled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do'' (Rm 12:2).*

Conscience is the judgment of our intellect about the rightness or wrongness of an intended action; it is the conclusion that our mind comes to after applying God's laws to a contemplated action: it is a practical moral judgment. When making a moral decision, we are seldom aware of any formal reasoning. This may be because the conclusion is immediately obvious, or because we may have learned the answer earlier, or have thought it out ahead of time. Many such decisions are, therefore, made without hesitation. Many people have the idea of conscience as an ''inner voice,'' telling them what is right and what is wrong.

Our moral judgments (conscience) may sometimes be mistaken. They are based on our knowledge of God's will for us as expressed in his laws and his revealed word — and this knowledge may be inadequate. Hence, it is most important that we try to know exactly God's commands, and our obligations, otherwise we may sometimes misunderstand the demands of God, but we must always do what we truly believe he wants us to do.

Disobeying God's Standards — Personal Sin

When we deliberately think, say, do or omit something

contrary to the law of God, we offend him. Such a personal offense is called *sin,* a turning away from him. Sometimes it may not be our intention to offend God, but the offense is implied by our sinful act in that we are going against his commands.

Unlike in the case of original sin, we ourselves are responsible or guilty of personal sin, because we knowingly and freely choose to disobey God's commands. Any act by which we violate a law of God unknowingly is really not a sin in the ordinary sense of the word, for we cannot break or lessen our friendship with God innocently. Some call this material sin; the Byzantine liturgy calls it an indeliberate or involuntary transgression.

Though Eastern theologians generally dislike making distinctions between mortal and venial sin, according to the Scriptures not all sin is the same. Some sins end in spiritual death *(Rm 6:21),* bring on doom and destruction *(1 P 2:3),* and will exclude the sinner from inheriting the kingdom of heaven *(1 Co 6:9-10, Ga 5:19-20).* Because such sins destroy the sinner's participation in the life of God and, therefore, cause spiritual death, they are called *mortal.* There are lesser sins or faults even good Christians commit over and over again *(cf. Jm 3:2);* these are called *venial.*

Aside from the Scriptures, we may get to know whether a sin is mortal or venial from the pronouncements of the Church, from the teachings of the Fathers and theologians, and from the nature of the act itself (whether it does or does not cause grave injury to God, to ourselves or to others).

Minimum Requirements for Happiness

The commandments are the minimum requirements set by God for happiness, not only in the life to come but right here on earth. The consequences of disobeying the natural law as embodied in the commandments are drastic, and no amount of sugar-coating can disguise them.

When man disregards the commandments regarding his relationship with the true God, he stoops to worship something not only beneath God but beneath himself, a crocodile, cat, bull,

cow, monkey or Satan in person. Some of these false gods demanded human sacrifices in the thousands. Similar abominations are still being committed today in witchcraft and satanic cults.

When man ceases to worship the true God, he substitutes man-made rites which shackle him with intolerable bonds. Divination, spiritism, sorcery, belief in dreams, astrology and hundreds of fashionable superstitions uselessly consume nerves, energy and time.

Enormous harm follows the disregarding of God's commands. In our own century, millions of men, women, and children were deliberately slaughtered in gas-chambers, or tortured and killed in prisons and concentration camps, because the sanctity of human life, defended by the fifth commandment, had been forgotten not only in Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union, but also in many other countries of the world. These sufferings were extended to many more through the sorrows of the victims' families.

Closer to home, the breaking of this commandment through murder, homicide, abortion, reckless driving, drunkenness and drug abuse has thrust misery, suffering, sorrow, crippling and death on millions more. Obeying the commandments against adultery and impurity would have spared other countless evils such as family misery, emotional hurt, divorce, unhappy children, or venereal disease.

The near-worship of wealth, money, cars, or fine dress has led thousands yearly to a life of crime, robbery, theft, arson, dishonesty, cheating, and perjury.

Many countries could have become social paradises had they put to better use the billions of dollars spent yearly on war material, police protection, court cases, hospitalization, medicine and rehabilitation. What moderns refuse to expiate in church, they do on the psychiatric couch, often gulping down tons of tranquilizers and alcohol to allay their stress, tension and fears. If the pagan Romans were inexcusable for their excesses *(Rm 1:20ff.)*, we Christians are incalculably more so.

The Commandments and the Christian

Jesus was brought up on the commandments and knew them by heart. He insisted many times that his followers obey them *(eg. M 19:16-19, Mk 10:17-19, Lk 18:18-20, etc.)*. Obeying the commandments means gaining eternal life, as Jesus bluntly told the Jewish lawyer, but he saw them not simply as rigid rules to be kept out of fear but as a step toward a totally new concept — the law of love: *"If you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn 18:15)*. Love, therefore, should always prompt our obedience, a love that is always eager to fulfill not merely the commands but the wishes of the Lord. These we will find in all of the New Testament, especially in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus taught the incomparable beatitudes:

> *"How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
> *Happy the gentle: they shall have the earth for their heritage.*
> *Happy those who mourn: they shall be comforted.*
> *Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall be satisfied.*
> *Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.*
> *Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God.*
> *Happy the peacemakers: they shall be called sons of God.*
> *Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right: theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 5:3-11).*

Love, of course, prompts all the sublime dispositions which Jesus praises here.

Love's only concerns are the many ways, great and small, which will strengthen and deepen our relationship, our participation in God's life. Love is proved by doing as much as we can for the Beloved. Jesus' whole life was spent for the sake of others, for us.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Commandments Relating to Love of God

"I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no gods except me. You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them . . ." (Ex 20:1-5).

Obligations Under the First Commandment

If we believe in God, hope in him and love him, we will worship God internally as well as externally. This is done by adoring him, praying to him and offering him sacrifice.

ADORATION consists in acts showing honor and subjection to God because of his excellence and our dependance upon him. Because we are creatures comprising both soul and body, our inner thoughts and emotions are expressed through gestures, facial expressions, etc. Likewise, our religious convictions and sentiments are revealed through external acts such as bowing (making the *metanies),* kneeling, striking the chest, folding the hands, or reciting prayers aloud. These not only tend to foster our interior devotion and edify our neighbor but, what is more important, they give public evidence or witness to our submission to God as Lord. Private prayer, however, need not be accompanied by any external act of devotion.

We may offer adoration to no one else, since God alone is the almighty Creator and Lord, but we may offer veneration to the Mother of God, the angels and saints. They deserve to be honored because of their proven love and loyalty to God.

PRAYER means talking to God, either in our own words or in standard formulas such as the "Our Father." Prayer may express praise, thanksgiving, sorrow for sin, or it may be a request to God. Though God knows our needs even before our request is made, he still wants us to pray for our needs, especially for spiritual help. Jesus commanded it *(Lk 11:9-13, Mk 14:38).*

As far as our attentiveness during prayer is concerned, the main thing is to have an awareness of the one with whom we are talking and in whose presence we are. If we deliberately and without reason let our minds wander to other things during prayer, we are guilty of some irreverence. In addition to attention, we should pray with love in our hearts, with trust and perserverance — never losing heart, never giving up. Jesus prayed often. So should his followers: *''He told them a parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart'' (Lk 18:1).* Christians pray in the morning and at night, before and after each meal, in times of danger or temptation, and before every undertaking — offering everything to God. This is what Paul meant when he told the Corinthians: *''Whatever you eat, whatever you drink, whatever you do at all, do it for the glory of God'' (1 Co 10:31).* Another effective way of sanctifying our day is frequently repeating the very brief ''Jesus Prayer''

Private prayer may be *vocal,* expressed in words, or it may be purely *mental,* a simple raising up of our minds and emotions to God without any words, like lovers communing with each other without word or gesture, being happy in each other's presence. Another way of putting it would be ''thinking about God.'' This may be done briefly, or formally by meditating on any of the sacred mysteries.

SACRIFICE in the New Law means offering and participating in the Eucharistic Liturgy on the days prescribed, namely, on Sundays and holy days of obligation (the latter may differ in various parts of the world). Christ redeemed us once for all by his death on the cross. That redemption is applied to us personally through the Eucharistic sacrifice and other liturgical services. To obtain their full effect, the faithful should take part in them reverently, actively and knowingly. They should try, according to their ability, to learn about the various liturgical services and take part in them wholeheartedly. The greater their knowledge, the better they can participate in liturgical celebrations, through responses, antiphons and songs, or by actions and bodily attitudes.

Prohibitions Under the First Commandment

Besides commanding us to recognize and worship the true God, the first commandment forbids us to worship or serve any other god.

IDOLATRY, the worship of creatures, is re-emerging in North America in the form of Satanism (the worship of Satan) and in some strange cults whose founders claim divine authority, or present themselves as the second Messiah.

Are Icons Forbidden "Graven Images" *(cf. Dt 4:15ff.)?* What God forbids in this commandment is the making of images as idols or gods. This is clear from the closing words, *"You shall not bow down to them or serve them."* Any image posed a danger to the faith of the ancient Israelites, yet God directed that the Ark of Covenant be sheltered between *two cherubs of beaten gold (Ex 25:18);* these images were to be in the very "holy of holies." God also commanded Moses to make a *bronze serpent* so that those bitten by snakes might look at it and live *(Nb 21:8-9).*

Early Christians found no objection to the use of sacred images such as the sign of the fish to represent Christ, and loaves of bread to signify the Holy Eucharist. Later, they used pictures in their prayers and worship, as the catacombs show. St. Basil, for example, stated: "I venerate the holy apostles, prophets and martyrs . . . I reverently kiss their images, for apostolic tradition does not prohibit their use, but rather sanctions the custom of placing them in the churches." Only in the eighth century did some Eastern Christians begin to object to the use of sacred images. This culminated in the heresy of iconoclasm (image-breaking) which lasted about a hundred years. St. John Damascene, who together with St. Theodore the Studite was the chief opponent of the image-breakers, wrote: "The image of the king is also called the king, but there are not two kings in consequence . . . Honoring the image is honoring the one who is set forth in the image . . ." The Eastern custom of using icons and mosaics, but not statues or other carved images seems to be a belated effect of iconoclasm.

Nothing brings home a truth more vividly than pictures or images. This is the basis for visual education, for illustrating

textbooks and magazines. And this is the reason why the Church has always encouraged the use of images and icons. To those who love, pictures of loved ones evoke more love. Sacred images help us pray, because they concentrate our attention on the holy one to whom we are speaking, either at home or in church.

All Superstitions Forbidden

Attributing supernatural powers to either persons or things is called *superstition*. Deuteronomy elaborates on the practices forbidden by the first commandment: *"There must never be anyone among you who makes his son or daughter pass through fire, who practices divination, who is soothsayer, augur or sorcerer, who uses charms, consults ghosts or spirits, or calls up the dead. For the man who does these things is destestable to Yahweh your God" (Dt 18:10-12).*

The same forms of superstition or their offshoots are still with us. People who no longer believe in God often seek by other means to come into contact with the spiritual world. By *black magic* and *sorcery,* they call upon some unholy spirit to produce preternatural effects. (Sleight-of-hand artistry is sinless). Through the use of amulets, charms, mascots and other *vain observances* people expect to avert harm or "bad luck." Through fortune-telling or other kinds of *divination* (palmistry, astrology, reading tea-leaves, etc.) they try to discover the future which is known only to God. Through spiritism, they attempt to communicate with spirits, especially with the spirits of the dead.

Often it is difficult to draw a definite line between natural power, fraud, and the power of suggestion. Some of these practices are undoubtedly foolish while others are definitely diabolical. That is why the Church warns her faithful to leave all of them alone because they are "detestable to God."

Wearing medals, crucifixes, and other such articles of devotion is not superstitious because trust is put, not in the pieces of wood or metal, but in the power of one in whose honor the article is worn. When a Byzantine Christian, for example, wears a crucifix, he expects protection from Christ, not from the engraved piece of metal.

Other Sins Against the First Commandment:

TEMPTING GOD means putting him or one of his powers to a test. A well-known atheist once tempted God in a public debate: taking out his watch, he declared, "If there be a God, I will give him three minutes in which to strike me dead." When nothing happened, he boasted, "You see, there is no God."

Risking one's life while expecting God to come to the rescue is testing God. Critically ill people who refuse to use ordinary medical procedures because they expect God to save them miraculously are also tempting God.

SIMONY is the act or the intention of buying or selling spiritual things for a temporal price. This sin insults God by assuming that divine goodness, mercy and grace can be bought or sold.

It is not simoniacal nor a sin to buy blessed articles (a crucifix, chalice, icon, etc.) as long as the price is not increased because of the blessing. Nor is it simoniacal to offer stipends for spiritual ministrations: these are given for the support of the priest, in accordance with the words of St. Paul, *"The Lord directed that those who preach the gospel should get their living from the gospel" (1 Co 9:14).*

SACRILEGE is the contemptuous treatment of any person, place or thing that has been publicly dedicated to God.

Mistreating a person in holy orders (or a religious) or sinning impurely with such a person is sacrilegious. So are acts (e.g., adultery, homicide, etc.) repugnant to the sanctity of churches, chapels, or consecrated cemeteries. Anyone receiving the sacraments of chrismation (confirmation), the Eucharist, matrimony or holy orders must be free from grave sin; otherwise, the reception is seriously sacrilegious.

When blessed sacramentals such as, palms, icons, holy pictures, etc., become useless, they should be burned.

The Second Commandment

"You shall not utter the name of Yahweh your God to misuse it, for Yahweh will not leave unpunished the man who utters his name to misuse it" (Ex 20:7).

God's name may and should be used, but not misused. If we truly love God's name, we shall not only respect it but proclaim and glorify it. That is why Byzantine Christians do not use secular expressions of greeting and farewell such as "hello" and "good-bye" but use instead thoroughly Christian ones (as did all of Western Europe before its secularization). During the year (outside of the Christmas and Easter seasons), for example, they use the expression "Glory be to Jesus Christ" and its response "Glory forever" both in greeting and farewell.* During the Christmas season, their greeting expresses faith in the incarnation: *Christ is born;* it's response is *Glorify him.*** Their Easter season's greeting expresses faith in Christ's resurrection: *Christ is risen;* while the response is, *Indeed he is risen.****

In danger or trouble, all of us should lovingly call upon the name of God or Jesus, for he guaranteed us his help if we do: *"I protect whoever knows my name, I answer everyone who invokes me, I am with them when they are in trouble; I bring them safety and honor" (Ps 91:14-15).* Byzantine Christians have not forgotten that promise, for they often use such pious expressions as "God protect you," "God help you," "Remain with God," "Go with God" and they mean them as loving prayers.

Vows and Oaths

God's name is honored by a *vow* because it is a decisive, voluntary promise made to him to do something pleasing to him. Any deed performed under a vow is an act of divine worship, and is therefore more meritorious than the same deed performed without a vow. In serious matters, a vow binds under pain of sin, grave or venial, depending upon the intention.

An *oath* is calling upon God to witness to the truth of what

**In Ukrainian and Russian it is Slava Isusu Khrystu* and its response, *Slava na viky.* In Greek it is *Doksa soi Khriste ho Theos* and *As doksazomen pantote Auton* and in Arabic *Al-Mujd Lelmaseeh* and *Al-Mujd Iaho DaEman.*

***The Ukrainians and Russians use: Khrystos razhdajetsia* and *Slavite Joho;* the Greeks, *Khristos egennete* and *Alethos egennete;* the Arabs, *Al-Maseeh Wolid* and *Hackan Innaho Wolid.*

****The Ukrainians and Russians use: *Khrystos voskres* and *Voistynu voskres;* the Greeks, *Khristos aneste* and *Alethos aneste;* the Arabs, *Al-Maseeh Kaam* and *Hackan Kaam.*

one says. It is an implied act of worship and faith, acknowledging that God is both all-knowing and truthful. A person must have a serious reason for taking an oath; Jesus himself taught, *"All you need say is 'Yes' if you mean yes, 'No' if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the evil one" (Mt 5:37).* But since many people are unreliable and dishonest, an appeal to the omniscient God may add necessary emphasis to an important declaration. Breaking an oath is sinful perjury.

Irreverent Use of God's Name

To use God's name thoughtlessly, irreverently, as in expressions of impatience, anger, surprise or emphasis is "taking God's name in vain." The offense is venially sinful, but it may be serious when anger is directed against God. Using the names of the saints or the Mother of God irreverently is also venially sinful.

Cursing

Not to be confused with swearing (taking an oath), cursing or damning means calling down evil upon persons or things.

Asking a just God to punish enemies or persecutors was tolerated in the Old Testament (e.g., the imprecatory psalms, *(Jr. 17:18).* In the New Law, Jesus commanded his followers to forgive all injuries, to be reconciled with enemies and to love them. He himself lived this teaching. With his dying breath, he asked his Father in heaven to forgive those who were killing him: *"Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34).* Our attitude as Christians should be the same.

Blasphemy

Any expression, thought or gesture that shows insulting contempt for God is blasphemy. God is indirectly reviled when such contempt is directed against the saints or the Church. The Old Law punished the blashemer by stoning *(Lv 24:16).* The charge against Jesus was blasphemy because he considered himself equal to God. Of itself, the sin of blasphemy is grave, but this presupposes that the person fully understands the gravity

of the blasphemous words or gestures and fully intends it. Most of the time, it seems, sufficient advertence is missing and so is serious guilt.

The Third Commandment

"Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. For six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath for Yahweh your God. You shall do no work that day" (Ex 20:8-10).

In the New Law, the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, replaced the Jewish sabbath with Sunday. The change took place very early, probably during apostolic times. St. Paul and the Christians of Troas, for example, gathered together on Sunday, the first day of the week *"to break bread" (Ac 20:7).* Paul also bade the Christians of Corinth to set aside whatever each could afford as alms every Sunday *(1 Co 16:2).* At the turn of the first century, the "Didache" puts Sunday as the day for assembling in common "to break bread and offer thanks" (XIV, 1). A little later, St. Ignatius of Antioch states that Christians "no longer observe the sabbath, but live according to the Lord's day (i.e., Sunday)" "Letter to the Magnesians," IX, 1).

St. Justin Martyr (about A.D. 150) explained the change: "Because it (Sunday) is the first day, the day on which God, changing darkness and matter, created the world; and it is the day on which our Saviour Jesus Christ arose from the dead" ("First Apology," 67). Later another reason was given: it was on Sunday that the Holy Spirit came down upon the apostles.

In addition to Sundays, the Church has established holy days of obligation. Since they vary from country to country, and even from eparchy to eparchy, no list is given here.

The Church has defined two obligations for the sanctification of the Lord's day: participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the abstention from all unnecessary servile work. These obligations are serious.

The Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy

The obligation to participate in the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy binds all Catholics who have reached the age of seven, have

attained the use of reason and have no valid excuse, such as health or distance. The obligation is fulfilled by attending the Eucharistic Liturgy in any Rite of the Catholic Church. No permission of any kind is needed to receive Holy Communion at Eucharistic Liturgies celebrated according to Rites other than one's own.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Commandments Relating to Love of Neighbor

"Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that Yahweh your God has given you" (Ex 20:12) So reads the fourth Commandment.

Implied in the precept of honoring parents are three duties: to love, respect and obey them. St. Paul put it well: *"Children, be obedient to your parents in the Lord — that is your duty. The first commandment that has a promise attached to it is: Honor your father and mother, and the promise is: and you will prosper and have a long life in the land" (Ep 6:1-3).*

This is the only commandment to which God specifically attached a temporal reward, in addition to the spiritual, perhaps as an incentive to observe it in difficult circumstances. Those brought up in tenderness and love do not need additional motivation, but those who have felt unwanted and neglected by their parents need all the motivation they can get to truly observe this commandment. God understands. No amount of medical attention and care can guarantee anyone a long and happy life on this earth, but a faithful observance of this commandment does! We have God's word for it.

Earthly blessings are not the only ones promised. Even greater are the spiritual blessings and gifts of grace *"Whoever respects his father is atoning for his sins, he who honors his mother is like someone amassing a fortune. Whoever respects his father will be happy with children of his own, he shall be heard on the day when he prays" (Si 3:3-6).*

The rewards of filial love are great: *"My son, support your father in his old age, do not grieve him during his life. Even if his mind should fail, show him sympathy, do not despise him in your health and strength; for kindness to a father shall not be forgotten but will serve as reparation for your sin. In the days of your affliction it will be remembered of you, like frost in sunshine, your sins will melt away" (Si 3:12-15).*

The obligations of parents towards their children are best

summarized by St. Paul in three simple expressions: "to bring up," "to guide," and "to correct" their children. The duty to "bring up" children means taking care of their physical and spiritual needs.

Just as parents take the place of God in our regard, so do our spiritual rulers, the Holy Father, bishops and priests. To them we owe honor and respect. We are bound to obey them in all those matters over which they have authority: matters of faith, morals, or anything closely connected with religious truth and church discipline.

Jesus told us that we should *"render to Caesar what is Caesar's" (Mt 22:21)*. Hence, we must respect the lawfully constituted government of our country and obey its laws. A citizen who fails in this duty is hampering good government, and so is harming the common good.

The Fifth Commandment

"You shall not kill" (Ex 20:13).

Other parts of the Scriptures formulate this commandment more precisely by adding the words "the innocent and just;" hence, it means, *You shall not kill the innocent and just (Ex 23:7; cf, Jr. 7:6, 22:3)*.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus added a new dimension to this commandment which reaches down into the innermost being of man by condemning even interior feelings of hatred and anger (cf. Mt 5:21-26). Christ's all-embracing law of love requires us to live in love and peace with our neighbor while seeking his and our own spiritual and bodily welfare.

Exposing oneself to death in trying to rescue someone from fire or drowning, though ordinarily not obligatory, is a heroic act of charity, as Jesus said, *"A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13)*.

Euthanasia or Mercy Killing

Painlessly putting a person to death in order to end his suffering is *euthanasia*. Sometimes it is called *mercy killing*, because

it is supposedly prompted by mercy. No matter what good or utilitarian motive prompts it, however, euthanasia is either murder or suicide for it is the direct taking of a human life.

Abortion

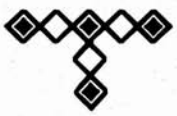
Abortion is expelling or killing the immature fetus. In today's affluent countries abortion is reaching the same proportions as at the time of the decadence of the Roman Empire when Christianity came on the scene. From its very beginning, the Church vigorously opposed the practice. The "Didache," similar in part to the Gospel of St. John, instructed Christians clearly and to the point, "Do not kill a fetus by abortion or commit infanticide" (II, 2). A few decades later, the "Epistle of Barnabas" has an identical precept: "Do not kill a fetus by abortion or commit infanticide" (XIX, 5). The attitude of the early Church is summed up by Tertullian: "With us murder is forbidden once for all. We are not permitted to destroy even the fetus in the womb, as long as blood is still being drawn to form a human being. To prevent the birth of a child is a quicker way to murder. It makes no difference whether one destroys a life already born or interferes with its coming to birth" ("Apology," IX, 8).

Directly procuring an abortion is always gravely sinful because it is probably murder; a fetus is an unborn person. Anything done with the serious intention of effecting an abortion is also gravely sinful, even if the abortion does not actually follow. Good motives, such as protecting the good name of a criminally assaulted woman, preventing the birth of a mentally retarded or crippled child, saving a pregnants woman's life (this is rare today) never justify abortion.

No one knows the exact time when the fetus is infused with a human soul, but it may be at the moment of conception or soon afterwards. Anyone willing to kill what may be human is, by intention, willing to kill what is human and, consequently, is guilty or murder.

Hastening the birth of a viable fetus, however is allowed for a good reason. Thus, if the mother's condition if gravely dan-

gerous, one may induce delivery as soon as it is probable that the child is viable. A dangerously diseased (e.g. cancerous) uterus may be surgically removed even though it contains a nonviable fetus. Surgery in cases of ectopic gestation (extra-uterine pregnancy) is also allowed.



CHAPTER XXV

The Commandments Relating to Love of Neighbor — Cont.

The Sixth and Ninth Commandments are: *"You shall not commit adultery" (Ex 20:14); "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (Ex 20:17).*

From the beginning, *"God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it,' (Gn 1:27-28).* We can almost hear Adam's joyous exclamation in that pre-dawn of history: *"'This at last is bone from my bones, and flesh of my flesh! this is to be called woman, for this was taken from man.' This is why a man leaves his father and mother and joins himself to his wife, and they become one body" (Gn 2:23-24).*

When tested about the possibility of divorce, Jesus quoted the above passage from Genesis and added that husband and wife *"are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united, man must not divide" (Mt 19:6, cf. Mk 10:7-9).* Inspired by God, St. Paul compares the union of marriage to the union of Christ and the Church, and explains that it entails total self-giving on the part of both spouses *(cf. Ep 5:21-33).*

God made sex and it is good and beautiful when rightly used in marriage, that is, for the generation of children and as an expression of love between husband and wife. God could have willed otherwise but, in his love, he wants men and women to share his awesome creative powers in bringing forth other human beings into existence. They generate the body and God creates the soul. The scriptures constantly celebrate the rich human values of courtship, betrothal, marriage, marital love, procreation, childbirth and family life.

Marital relations or intercourse, therefore, are good and holy when performed in keeping with God's law; so are all sexual intimacies preliminary to or accompanying marital relations. This holds true even if procreation is impossible.

The official Church directives concerning contraception are well known to all. Because of particular circumstances, reconciling conjugal love with parenthood (adequate care for the upbringing and education of children) is sometimes agonizingly difficult. In this regard the bishops of Canada gave their faithful this norm: ". . . In accord with the accepted principles of moral theology, if these persons have tried sincerely but without success to pursue a line of conduct in keeping with the given directives, they may be safely assured that whoever honestly chooses that course which seems right to him does so in good conscience" ("Statement of Canadian Bishops on the Encyclical Humanae Vitae," Plenary Assembly, St. Boniface-Winnipeg, Sept. 27, 1968, No. 26).

Chastity

Despite indulgent modern attitudes toward the misuse of sex, especially in affluent countries, true Christians must maintain their moral convictions without dilution and live accordingly. This is not some starry ideal but an attainable reality. Chastity, of course, means self-mastery but God's help is always given to those who ask. Pope Paul VI put it beautifully: "If we wish, we can keep our body and spirit chaste. The Master, who speaks with great severity in this matter *(Mt 5:28),* does not propose an impossible thing. We Christians, regenerated in baptism, though we are not freed from this kind of weakness, are given the grace to overcome with relative facility" (From his address "To Live the Paschal Mystery," May 31, 1971).

The Seventh and Tenth Commandments

"You shall not steal" (Ex 20:15). *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house . . . or his servant, man or woman, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is his"* (Ex 20:17).

Man has a right to live. The necessary means, including material goods, to support his life and that of his dependents is part of that right. These material goods, chiefly consisting in food, clothing and shelter, become his through labor, inheritance or gift. In the Seventh and Tenth Commandments, God has

given us divine laws which protect the rights of ownership against unjust deeds and desires. Anything which violates the rights of the owner beyond his reasonable will is forbidden: theft and robbery, willful damage or destruction of another's goods, fraud, graft, paying an unjust wage, non-payment of debts and not returning things found or borrowed.

The Eighth Commandment

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Ex 20:16).

This commandment forbids lying in or out of court and whatever injures the good name or honor of another, that is, the violation of secrets, detraction, contumely, slander, rash judgments and suspicions.

PART SIX

THE HOLY MYSTERY OF GROWING IN THE LIFE OF GOD

CHAPTER XXVI

Byzantine Liturgical Worship and The Sacraments

Those who love God and share in his life increase their holiness through good works. The faithful are sanctified by the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and by their participation in the liturgy, the official public worship of the Church, which gives public honor and glory to God.

The Liturgy

Image of the Heavenly Liturgy

As Byzantine Christians regard the Church as "heaven on earth" (cf., p. 189 above), so also they view the liturgy, especially the Eucharistic Liturgy, as an image of the heavenly liturgy described by the "Book of Revelation" and the "Letter to the Hebrews." The heaven-on-earth concept means that the things of earth are but shadows of the true realities of heaven.

Byzantine Christians hold that the things of earth have value only in so far as they were transfigured by the Incarnation. Early Eastern Fathers were enamored of this idea. They emphasized not only the transfiguration of man through grace, but saw the whole created universe as transfigured by the Incarnation to give glory to the Word-made-flesh reigning triumphantly in heaven. The Byzantine liturgy enfolds the whole cosmos in the act of worship. Glimpses of the celestial liturgy are perceived in the "Book of Revelation," where the worship of Christ in glory is not limited to the angels and saints, but includes *"everything that lives in the air, and on the ground, and under the ground, in the sea" (Rv. 5:13).*

While everything on earth and in the universe — the animals and plants of the earth, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea; flowers, mountains and rivers; the sun, moon and the stars — each in its own way, silently give glory to God, redeemed man joins the angelic hosts in the eternal hymn of triumphal joy to the King of all. This is expressed eloquently in the Cherubic Hymn of the Eucharistic Liturgy, while the holy gifts are being

carried in procession from the table of preparation to the altar. The Hymn calls upon the people of God to join the heavenly choirs and share their eternal view:

> "Let us who mystically represent the cherubim in singing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-giving Trinity — let us now lay aside every earthly care, so that we may welcome the King of all who comes escorted by invisible hosts of angels. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia."

While the Eucharistic doctrine is essentially the same in both East and West, the approach is different. In their Eucharistic Liturgy, the Byzantines insist on the all-powerful heavenly King triumphing over death, rather than on the suffering Mediator and Redeemer expiating mankind's sins; they stress the victorious Lamb of God, rather than the bloodless renewal of the sacrifice of the divine Victim. All this, of course, prefigures redeemed man's final "divinization" in heaven. The setting in Byzantine churches is designed to represent the earthly liturgy as an image of the celestial, for its structure, arrangement and decoration abound with the splendors of the heavenly world. Participation in the liturgy is a confession of faith in what is most real: man's life in the resurrected, glorified Christ.

The Byzantine Church regards ceremonial, actions and prayers as important, in the sense that even the smallest deed or word may become a vehicle of the Holy Spirit, part of the "Mystery" making Christ present and acting upon the souls of men. Furthermore, these liturgical rites instill a sense of penance, gratitude and charity in both clergy and faithful. Like the early Christians, Byzantines have become familiar with Holy Scriptures, with their catechism and their spirituality through their liturgical ceremonies and texts.

Ritual Beauty Attracts

Ritual splendor preaches to men and captures their hearts for God. This is what won the heart of Vladimir, king of the Kievan nation (modern European Russia and the Ukraine) for God, with the result that this whole country embraced the faith of Christ.

According to the "Russian Primary Chronicle," Vladimir

sent his envoys to the Muslims of Bulgaria, to the Latin Christians of Germany and Rome and, finally, to the Christian Greeks of Constantinople. On their return, the emissaries reported of the first three: "There is no joy, no beauty in their worship." But about the liturgy at Hagia Sophia, the cathedral of Constantinople, they reported: "We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendor or beauty anywhere on earth. We cannot describe it to you: only this we know, that God dwells there among men, and that their service surpasses the worship of all other places. For we cannot forget that beauty."

Only this we know, that God dwells there among men: this saying still expresses the feelings of all ethnic groups belonging to the Byzantine Church. Throughout the centuries, their forefathers have poured their best poetry, art, and music into perfecting their rites. The strong impact of the Byzantine liturgy is due to the fact that here man-made beauty reflects divine beauty: a strong faith in the divine mysteries lifting up the heart from artistic beauty to the realities of heaven.

The Liturgy and the Scriptures

The Byzantine liturgy is wholly rooted in God's written word. Except for a very few passages, all four Gospels are read through at least once during the year. The same holds true for the rest of the New Testament (except for the Book of Revelation) in the Epistle readings. While Old Testament readings have been eliminated from the Eucharistic Liturgy centuries ago (probably in the seventh or eighth century), other Byzantine liturgical services such as Matins, Vespers, etc., have kept them, especially the Law (Pentateuch), the Prophets and the Psalms. These services are still celebrated faithfully in many parish churches, and they are loved by lay people as much as by monks and priests. Byzantine Christians, even the illiterate, often memorized much of the Bible by this truly remarkable use of the Scriptures in their parish churches.

Scriptures are not confined to readings: all Byzantine liturgical prayers contain scriptural passages, quoted directly or indirectly. They also abound with biblical imagery. Devout Byzantine Christians live and breathe in a biblical atmosphere, so that it

becomes natural to them.

Participation in the Liturgy

Byzantine liturgical services are geared for participation by the *whole* of God's people, each according to his rank.

The priest-celebrant fills that part in the holy of holies for which he was ordained: he brings about Christ's presence and feeds the faithful in Christ's name with the word and grace of God.

The deacon links priest and people, introducing the different stages of worship and leading the faithful in their petitions and prayers. At his invitation, they unite themselves with the celebrant and with each other.

The people play an important part in the liturgy. Besides ratifying the priest's prayers and actions with "Amens," they sing the responses, the hymns, the Symbol of Faith (Creed), the Lord's Prayer, etc. From earliest childhood, through repeated liturgical experience, Byzantine Christians become familiar with the audible parts of their public worship, so that when it comes to participating, they do so with unconscious and unstudied ease. They think of themselves, not as merely "attending" liturgical services, but as forming part of a living, harmonious whole.

Such intimate participation reveals the communal, familial character of the liturgy. The oneness of the community is reinforced by the fact that whenever possible liturgical services are celebrated only once a day on the one altar of a church. If many priests wish to celebrate, they may do so together. Concelebration has been a constant tradition in the Byzantine Church.

The Sacraments

In the English-speaking world, the term "sacrament" is generally used and clearly understood. That is why we shall use it here, although the Byzantine tradition prefers the terms "mysteries" or "holy mysteries."

The Greeks call the sacraments *Mysteria;* the Rumanians,

Mistere; the Arabic Melkites, *Asraar;* the Russians, *Tainstva;* the Ukrainians, *Tajny;* the Bulgarians, *Tasinstva* or *Tajny;* the Serbians, *Tajne*.

The reasons why they prefer these terms are partly historical and partly due to the nature of the sacraments themselves. Historically, the sacraments were among the most important truths of faith which early Christians were forbidden to divulge to non-Christians—in order to avoid arrest, but also because holy things were not to be revealed to the unworthy. A sacrament is indeed a mystery by its very nature, since it consists in an outward reality (sign) and an inner, mysterious reality, called grace. Chrysostom put it beautifully when he wrote:

> "It is called a mystery, because what we believe is not the same as what we see, but we see one thing and believe another... On hearing of a laver, he the unbeliever reckons it merely as water, but I behold, not simply the thing that is seen, but the purification of the soul by the Spirit. He considers only that my body has been washed through immersion in baptism; but I am convinced that the soul has become pure and holy; and I regard it as the sepulchre, the resurrection where the old man dies in the waters of baptism and the new man arises, the sanctification, the kingdom of heaven, the full effusion of the Spirit. For not by the sight do I judge the things that appear, but by the eyes of the mind. When I hear the body of Christ mentioned, I understand what is said in one sense and the unbeliever in another" ("Homily Seven on Corinthians," 2).

What a Sacrament Is

Like the Chuch, a sacrament is both visible and invisible, a combination of an external, visible sign which is perceived by the senses and an inner, invisible grace which is not. Add the fact of divine institution by Christ, and we have the elements of a definition. A sacrament consists in (1) an ex-

ternal sign or rite, (2) instituted by Christ, (3) in order to give grace.

The external sign, different in each sacrament, consists in some visible matter (water, bread and wine, oil) or human action (absolution, imposition of the hand(s), together with the necessary words chosen by the Lord to impart grace in a real manner, and not merely symbolically. The God-man alone could have attached to these visible signs the inner real power of producing spiritual and super-natural effects, making them vehicles of the Holy Spirit. Because the matter itself (bread, wine, water, oil) is transfigured, made holy, it prefigures the *apokatastasis,* the final restoration and redemption of all matter on the Last Day.

To the simple, essential signs or rites of each sacrament which Jesus established and without which a sacrament is invalid, the Church added ceremonials, prayers and liturgical actions in order to bring out the grace proper to each. They clarify what the sacrament does invisibly for the soul, but may be omitted in emergencies. Byzantine theologians dislike "dissecting" the sacraments even abstractly into essential parts, non-essential parts, integral parts, "moments of consecration," etc. Every part, principal or secondary, is a means by which Christ acts on the souls of men through the Holy Spirit. Because such parts are precious and share in the divine dignity and meaning of the sacraments, no priest has the right to omit, curtail, or change anything at his own discretion. The rites of celebration may be changed only by the authorities of the Church.

Kinds of Grace Produced

Christ died for us once for all on Golgotha, and redeemed us. But the merits, the fruits of that redemption have to be applied to each individual person—chiefly but not solely through the sacraments. God can and does use every conceivable means to affect men's souls.

The seven sacraments embrace the whole of human life, from birth, through the successive stages of life, to the grave and beyond. A person is born into the world, grows, brings forth children,

falls ill, takes precautions against sickness. Finally, death claims his body but his soul lives on. Spiritual counterparts to these events are found in the seven sacraments. Baptism effects spiritual birth, the beginning of God's life in the soul. Confirmation-chrismation provides the necessary strength for growth of this life, while the Eucharist provides nourishment for ever-improving spiritual good health and zest. When participation in God's life weakens or ceases, the sacrament of reconciliation (penance) or the anointing of the sick serves to heal or restore that life in God. Through Christian marriage, parents bring children into the Kingdom of God and care for them. Finally, ordination enables men to exercise God's powers to make men holy, to rule and teach them.

Each sacrament produces two kinds of grace: "sanctifying grace" which provides or increases participation in God's life, and "sacramental grace" which fulfills each sacrament's specific purpose.

Right Dispositions

There is nothing automatic about the sacraments: no one can be sanctified against his will. Before any sacrament becomes effective, an adult must personally intend to accept Christ and to fill all the conditions of a worthy reception.

A person must be baptized, incorporated into the visible body of the Church, before receiving the other sacraments instituted for members alone. Furthermore, he must have the right intentions and dispositions: the sacraments are not for the impenitent or for unbelievers.

Presupposing proper intentions and dispositions, those spiritually dead may receive baptism and reconciliation (the sacrament of penance) in order to attain God's life for the first time or to regain it after serious sin. These are called the "sacraments of the dead" because they may be received by those spiritually dead.

Confirmation-chrismation, the Holy Eucharist, anointing of the sick, holy orders and matrimony presuppose the existence of God's life in the soul. They are called the "sacraments of the living." They increase sanctifying grace. People who have

committed serious sin must confess them and receive sacramental absolution before receiving any of the sacraments of the living, otherwise, they commit a grave sin of sacrilege.

What is Required of the Officiant

In order to effect a sacrament validly, the officiant's intention must be that of the Church.

The minister of the sacraments is generally an ordained priest or bishop endowed with the proper faculties. In marriage, however, the spouses themselves are the ministers, imparting the sacrament upon each other. Besides priests and bishops, anyone (even an unbeliever) may baptize in emergencies. But in all cases, the officiant's intention must be that of the Church., even without an explicit expression of it.

The officiant should celebrate such holy mysteries with faith, devotion and fervor, yet the validity of the sacrament does not depend upon his personal worthiness. In all sacraments, the ultimate operative power is divine, as the Scriptures clearly indicate (e.g., Jn 1:33, I Co 3:7, I Co 4:1, Ep 4:11ff., Hb 5:1, Hb 13:12), and does not depend upon the moral goodness of the human officiant. Christ is always the principal minister of the sacradents; hence, it is Christ who draws on the fruits of his redeeming death and sanctifies souls through the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER XXVII

The Sacrament of Initiation - Baptism

"Repent , for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand." So cried John the Baptist in the wilderness *(Mt. 3:2)*. To those who repented and went down into the water, the baptism performed by John signified sorrow for sin and a firm commitment to improve, and nothing more. John himself clearly said so: *"I have baptized you with water, but he, the Christ to come will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mk 1:8)*.

The baptism instituted by Christ was different. As he explained to Nicodemus *(Jn 3:3)*, it was to be a real spiritual rebirth wrought through water and the Holy Spirit. Without it, no one could enter the kingdom of God.

The Baptism Instituted by Christ

Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, he gave the apostles power to regenerate men through water and the Holy Spirit and to teach his truth: *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you" (Mt 28:18-19); "Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mk 16:15-16)*.

The apostles began using this power on the first Pentecost, when about three thousand were baptized after hearing Peter preach: *"You must repent, and every one of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit" (cf., Ac 2:38-39, 41)*. The apostles went out beyond the borders of their homeland, convincing people of the truth of Christ's teachings and baptizing converts — at Samaria, Damascus, Caesarea, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, etc. *(cf., Ac. 8:12, 9:18, 10:47-48, 18:8, 19:5, 16:34, etc.)*

The Effects of Baptism

EVERY SIN MAY BE FORGIVEN. When St. Peter told the people of Jerusalem, *"Every one of you must be baptized...for the forgiveness of your sins" (Ac 2:38),* he did not exclude any sin, original or personal. St. Paul explained to the Colossians: *"You have been buried with him, when you were baptized; and by baptism, too, you have been raised up with him through your belief in the power of God who raised him from the dead. You were dead because you were sinners...he has brought you to life with him, he has forgiven us all our sins" (Col 2:11-13).* When he wrote to the Corinthians, he listed many sins which exclude people from heaven, yet he stated: *"These are the sort of people some of you were once, but now you have been washed clean, and sanctified, and justified through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and through the Spirit of our God." (1 Co 6:11).*

BAPTISM ALSO CANCELS ALL PUNISHMENT, TEMPORAL AS WELL AS ETERNAL, DUE TO SIN. This follows from the fact that baptism not only takes away all sin, but also renews and regenerates the baptized. The old man, full of sin, is buried with Christ.

These effects of baptism are entirely spiritual. The temporal effects of original sin are not taken away: the pains and sufferings of this life will still have to be endured; the passions remain unruly; the will is still weakened and bodily death is inevitable, etc.

BAPTISM GIVES A COMPLETELY NEW LIFE: *"When we were baptized in Christ Jesus we were baptized in his death; in other words, when we were baptized we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life" (Rm 6:3-4).* That is why it is called a new birth, a rebirth: *"It was for no reason except his own compassion that he saved us, by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit which he has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our Saviour. He did this so that we should be justified by his grace, to become heirs looking forward to inheriting eternal life. This doctrine you can rely on" (Tt 3:5-8).* This new life is a sharing in the life of God, in his very nature *(cf. 2 P 1:4),*

whereby the baptized becomes a child of God *(cf. 1 Jn. 3:2)*. That is why baptism is called a bath of regeneration and not a bath of remission of sins.

Together with this new life, the recipient received the gifts of faith, hope and charity, also the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit. These gifts make possible the practice of evangelical counsels and beatitudes.

Through this new life, the baptized become members of Christ's Mystical Body, as Paul reminded the Galatians: *"All baptized in Christ, you have all clothed yourselves in Christ, and there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Ga 3:27-28);* and to the Corinthians, he wrote: *"You know, surely, that your bodies are members making up the body of Christ" (1 Co 6:15)*. The spirit of Christ pervades the baptized and unites them with him as their head.

BAPTISM ALSO MAKES THE RECIPIENT A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH. Jesus identified himself with the members of the Church when he asked Paul before his conversion: *"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?...I am Jesus, and you are persecuting me" (Ac 9:4-5)*. Paul was impressed with this truth for he develops it in several of his Epistles: *"Now the Church is his body, he is its head" (Col 1:18)*. Baptism unites the recipients with Christ externally by making them members of his Church. This incorporation marks the soul with a special sacramental character which lasts for eternity: *"Remember it is God himself who assures us all, and you, of our standing in Christ, and has anointed us, marking us with his seal and giving us the pledge, the Spirit, that we carry in our hearts" (2 Co 1:21-22)*.

Since baptism imparts new life, the life of God, to the soul, it carries the promise of salvation, the right to heaven. Only grave sin cancels this right to heaven. The internal union of the baptized with Christ enables them to receive the graces necessary for leading a godly life and for working out their salvation. By their external union with Christ, as members of his Church, they are able to receive the other sacraments and to share in all the treasures of the Church.

The Necessity of Baptism

"I tell you most solemnly, unless a man is born through water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:5).

Children are born in the state of original sin *(cf. Rm 5:12-14)*, hence they must be brought into the state of life through baptism. No question was ever raised about infant baptism in the primitive Church. Circumcision, the Old Testament figure for baptism, was performed on the eighth day after birth. In Acts *(16:15)*, we read that Lydia and her whole household were baptized at Thyatira; the jailer of Paul and Silas and *"all his household"* were baptized at Philippi *(Ac 16:32-33); "The family of Stephanus"* was baptized at Corinth *(1 Co 1:16)*. Surely there were children in these households.

St. Irenaeus, a disciple of the martyred St. Polycarp who was a disciple of the Apostle John, writes "Christ came to save all who through him are reborn unto God: infants and children, boys and youths, and aged parents ("Against the Heresies" II, 22,4). In the third century, Origen writes that in his day the Church's tradition of baptizing infants was regarded as of apostolic origin ("Comment. on Romans," 5,9).

Parents would naturally want to share with their children the most precious heritage they had received, baptism's spiritual riches, the very life of God. Because of the tremendous importance of baptism for time and eternity, the Church has always commanded its members to have their children baptized as soon as is reasonably possible after birth.

Kinds of Baptism

Some people remain unbaptized through no fault of their own. Are they not saved? They can be, through the "baptism of blood" or the "baptism of desire."

Jesus promised eternal life as the reward of martyrdom, dying for his sake: *"Anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 10:39)"; "A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13).* This is the "baptism of blood." The Church has always recognized that unbaptized martyrs gain eternal life. That is why the Church has honored

the Holy Innocents as saints. *(cf. Mt 2:16-18).* They confessed Christ, not by words but by their death. The same may be said about the unbaptized catechumens, those under instruction in the faith, who gave their lives for Christ in the early centuries of the Church.

St. Augustine reflects the attitude of the church in his day when he writes: "To all those who die confessing Christ, even though they have not received the laver of regeneration, martyrdom will prove as effective for the remission of sins as if they were washed at the baptismal font" ("The City of God," XIII, 2). Adult martyrs receive remission, not only of their sins, but also of the eternal and temporal punishment due to them.

The "baptism of desire" is realized in those who expressly desire baptism, but die before they can receive it. In A.D. 392, Emperor Valentinian II died while he was still under instruction in the faith. St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, preached his funeral sermon. "I hear you express grief that he did not receive the sacrament of baptism. Tell me, what else is there in us, except the will and petition? Long before he came to Italy, he wanted to be initiated and expressed his intention to be baptized by me as soon as possible . . . Has he not, therefore, the grace which he desired? Surely he received it because he asked for it" "Obituary of Valentinian."

What happens to a child who dies without baptism? The Church has left this an open question. The most common opinion of theologians is that such infants will not have to endure any sufferings after death, but will enjoy at least a natural happiness without seeing God face to face. Others speculate that God allows them to obtain grace by a baptism of desire before death.

God wishes to sanctify all people. Christ died for all. God can sanctify the soul of an infant even without formal baptism. Whether he does so before the child's death or how he does it, is his secret, but one thing is certain: God's infinite and mysterious love goes far beyond anything imaginable.

Jesus promised justification and, hence, remission of sins to those who love God: *"Anybody who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and show myself to him . . . If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will*

love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him'' (Jn 14:21, 23).

The baptism of desire does not have to be explicit: it includes all those who strive to lead a good life and wish to obey the Supreme Being — the millions of good people who would have obeyed, had they known about the command of Christ.

Anyone justified by baptism of desire, however, is not an actual member of the visible Church, nor is he capable of receiving the other sacraments until he is baptized by water.

In Emergencies Anyone May Baptize

Under normal circumstances, a bishop, priest or deacon imparts baptism solemnly, with the proper ceremonial. In emergencies, however, anyone, even a non-Catholic, may validly baptize. Doctors, nurses and all who minister to newborn babies should make sure that they know how to baptize. In fact, every Christian should know.

Here is how to do it: Intending to baptize according to the mind of Christ and his Church, one pours water on the forehead of the infant while saying: ''The servant of God, N . . ., is baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'' (or ''I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'').

While pouring water on the forehead is the most convenient way of baptizing in emergencies, baptism can be conferred also by aspersion (sprinkling — the so-called clinical baptism) or by what is the usual way in Eastern Churches — pronouncing the necessary words while immersing the person in water three times. In all cases if the infant survives, the ceremonies of solemn baptism should be performed later.

The Rite of Solemn Baptism

Most members of the early Church were converts from paganism. To become a Christian implied a serious decision, for a baptized Christian belonged wholly to Christ, breaking with the past, with customs, often with friends and even family. Leading a godly life in an immoral and vicious world was no

easy task. Until A.D. 313, becoming a Christian was an act of high treason punishable by death. The thought of torture and death was never far from the mind of every follower of Christ.

The Church set up a program of rigorous training, often lasting three to five years, during which the candidate had to prove his sincerity. This he did by leading a good life, by faithfully attending religious services, and by taking instruction classes. Anyone who did not measure up was rejected. The phenomenal growth of the Church and the thousands of martyrs prove the effectiveness of this rigorous discipline. Before anyone was accepted into training (catechumenate), trustworthy Christians who knew the candidate personally had to introduce him and vouch for him. This was a precaution against spies and informers during the persecutions — and this is how the practice of having sponsors at baptism began. Sponsors or godparents should be good Church members, for they take on the serious obligation of making sure, in default of parents, that the baptized will be properly instructed in the faith and will comply with all religious obligations.

The Rite of Baptism

ENROLLMENT In the early centuries, the candidate (catechumen) who completed several years of probation and instruction was eligible to enter the ranks of the "illumined," the final stages of preparation for baptism. Again, the examination for acceptance was severe; Christian neighbors were questioned about the candidate's behavior. Those found worthy were solemnly enrolled in a special book, the "book of life." St. Cyril of Jerusalem compares it with the registration of soldiers into the army. The pastor marked the candidate with the sign of the cross, and imposed his hand on him while reciting the appropriate prayer. The candidate's name and that of his sponsors were then inscribed in the register.

Solemn baptism in the Byzantine Church still begins with the same procedure, even in the case of infants. The priest breathes three times into the baptizand's face, marks his brow and chest three times with the sign of the cross, and imposes his hand upon his head while reciting the prayer of enrollment.

EXORCISM: Frequent exorcisms were another important way of putting off the old man. Many moderns may scoff at the idea of the devil as a personal being, but the Scriptures leave little doubt about it. Exorcisms were usually performed individually. Prayers were recited, adjuring the evil spirit(s) to depart. There were also the imposition of the hand and insufflation (breathing upon the face). Early Christians believed that both original sin and personal sin put the sinner under the power of the devil.

The present Byzantine rite of exorcism follows an identical procedure. The priest recites three solemn prayers, adjuring Satan to go out and never return; these are accompanied by the imposition of hand. He says a fourth prayer which includes breathing upon the candidate's mouth, forehead and chest, while he implores God to drive out every evil and unclean spirit hiding within the heart of the subject.

These prayers are filled with scriptural expressions, a sign of their ancient origin.

RENUNCIATION OF THE DEVIL The Greeks had a word for it: *apotaksis,* taking one's leave from the camp of Satan. At present, this is generally known as the renunciation of the devil. It is a personal confrontation with the evil one. If the baptizand is an adult, he turns to face the West, the direction of sunset and darkness, symbolic of evil, the place where Satan dwelt. He lifts up his hands to show he is breaking the shackles of evil and, in answer to the priest's queries, he renounces the devil three times. Finally, to show his contempt for Satan, as symbolized by the West, he breathes out and spits in that direction.

This vivid "camp-leaving" also dates from the early centuries. In case of infants, the renunciation is made by the sponsors in the baby's name.

UNITING WITH CHRIST AND PROFESSING THE FAITH As in early centuries, after forsaking the camp of Satan, the baptizand enters that of Christ by turning around and facing the East, the direction of dawn and the rising sun which is symbolic of Christ, the Sun of Justice and Truth, the light of the world. This is the *syntaksis,* literally, "joining the camp" of Christ and his ranks. Again, there are three questions and three answers asserting adherence to Christ.

The priest asks the baptizand whether he believes in Christ. The latter responds that he does, then recites the profession of the faith in form of the Nicene Creed. The priest asks three times whether the candidate has indeed united himself to Christ; to each question the candidate responds affirmatively. The candidate then confirms the submission of his life to the triune God. In infant baptism, the sponsors act and answer for the child. This part of the rite is concluded with a prayer asking God to grant the candidate the great grace of holy baptism.

Usually, the water and oil are blessed for each individual baptism.

ANOINTING WITH OIL The candidate is led to the baptistry where he is anointed with holy oil. This is called "oil of gladness," a sign of many good things: healing, partaking of the good olive-tree which is Jesus Christ, and sharing in a royal priesthood. Alluding to Romans 11:17, St. Cyril of Jerusalem explained to his converts that through this anointing they became "partakers of the good olive-tree, Jesus Christ; for you were cut off from the wild olive-tree and grafted into the good one and made to share the fatness of the true olive-tree; the exorcised oil, therefore, symbolizes participation in the fatness of Christ" ("Cat." XX, 3). The idea goes back to the olive branch brought by a dove to Noah's Ark as a sign from God that his wrath was ended, that he had given man another chance *(cf. Gn 8:6-21)*. The olive tree and its oil indicate primarily reconciliation and salvation. Furthermore, the ancients used oil, especially olive oil, to soothe and heal, and they extended the concept to the spiritual realm. During the blessing of the baptismal water, the sign of the cross is made over it with the oil. Some oil is poured into it to show that baptism of water takes away sins, reconciles man with God, and therefore, heals and soothes the soul.

According to the fourth or fifth century "Apostolic Constitutions" ("Book II, 15), the anointing shows that the baptized become a *"chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart" (1 P 2:9)*. Today, the anointing with oil is done on forehead, chest, back (between the shoulder-blades), ears, hands and feet. An appropriate prayer, dedicating each member for the service of God, is said at each anointing.

This ceremony originated in the first or second century.

THE ACTUAL BAPTISM Early Christians in both East and West baptized by a triple immersion in water — a clear sign of the three-day burial of Christ and of his resurrection. It is also a profession of faith in the three Persons of the Godhead in whose name the person is baptized. Almost all Eastern Churches still baptize in this way. At each immersion, the priest pronounces the words: "The servant (handmaid) of God, N . . ., is baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This typically Eastern formula uses the passive voice in order to stress the action of God, not man, in imparting the sacraments. At this moment, all sins and their punishment are removed.

In order to symbolize what is happening to the soul, the baptized is clothed with a white garment, the "garment of righteousness." A lighted candle may be given to the baptized or to the sponsors (in case of infants) as a symbol of the light of faith and of good deeds with which the baptized is to shine brightly during life, so that when the Lord will come, he or she may go forth in radiance to meet him with all the saints — an allusion to the Ten Wise Virgins *(Cf. Mt 25:1-11)*.

In all Eastern Churches, the Byzantine included, the priest imparts the sacrament of chrismation (confirmation) immediately after baptism.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Sacrament of Chrismation (Confirmation)

"When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, and they went down there, and prayed for the Samarians to receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet he had not come down on any of them: they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit" (Ac 8:14ff.). Here, the Scriptures expressly state that imparting the Holy Spirit differs from baptism and produces a different effect. Philip had baptized the Samarians, but as a mere deacon, he did not have the power of imparting the Holy Spirit. Only the apostles or those who had received the priesthood had such power. That is why Peter and John risked their lives to go to Samaria and impart the Holy Spirit in a separate sacrament.

Paul consecutively but distinctly imparted the two sacraments at Ephesus: *"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and the moment Paul had laid hands on them the Holy Spirit came down on them..." (Ac 19:5f.).*

In writing to the Corinthians, Paul refers to the reception of the Holy Spirit: *"Remember it is God himself who assures us all, and you, of our standing in Christ, and has anointed us, marking us with his seal and giving us the pledge, the Spirit, that we carry in our hearts" (2 Co 1:21f.).* Likewise, when he writes to the Ephesians: *"And you too have been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit of the Promise, the pledge of our inheritance..." (1:13f.).* Here Paul may be using figurative language (anointing, marking with seal, etc.) but the passage contains expressions which keep recurring later in the writings of the Fathers in connection with the sacrament of imparting the Holy Spirit. If "sealing with the Holy Spirit" did not originally include real anointing in addition to the laying on of hand(s), it soon became customary. Some fourth-century sources, for example, mention only the laying on of hand(s); others, only the anointing or "sealing" while still others refer to both.

At Jerusalem, St. Cyril mentions only the anointing with chrism and he clearly attributes the bestowal of the Holy Spirit to it: "To you was given an uncton...and this is the Holy Spirit", "While your body is anointed with visible ointment, your soul is sanctified by the Holy and life-giving Spirit." "After holy baptism and the mystical chrism, after having put on the whole armor of the Holy Spirit, you are to stand against the power of the adversary," ("Lecture XXI," On Chrism, 1,2,3,4). He also mentions the parts of the body that were anointed: forehead, ears, nostrils, breast. ("Lecture XXI," 4).

The hand is laid on the forehead by the very act of applying the chrism; hence, many Eastern Churches including the Byzantine, have only the anointing with chrism or chrismation without a separate laying on of hands.

The accompanying words in the early sources are not as uniform as those of baptism but two thoughts are always expressed: (1) signing or sealing and (2) the grace of gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The Present Rite of Chrismation (Confirmation)

In the Byzantine Church, adults and infants receive the sacrament of chrismation (confirmation) immediately after baptism. The godparents are usually the same for both sacraments. The priest is the ordinary minister of confirmation, whereas in the Latin Rite it is the bishop. For centuries, the Byzantine bishop's or patriarch's part in chrismation has been confined to making and consecrating the chrism on Holy Thursday.

Connecting the actual anointing of chrismation with baptism is a prayer which recounts the effects of baptism and pleads for an effective bestowal of the gifts proper to both chrismation and the Eucharist. The ancient direct sequence of these sacraments is thus preserved.

The priest dips his thumb into holy chrism and, resting his hand on the head of the recipient, he traces with his thumb the sign of the cross on the forehead, the eyes, nostrils, mouth ears, chest, hands and feet. As he anoints, he says, "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

In ancient times, the newly baptized and confirmed were led

from the baptistry into the Church for the Eucharistic Liturgy, where they received communion for the first time. Instead of this, the priest now leads the newly confirmed who holds a lighted candle (sponsors carry both infant and candle) around the baptismal font three times. At each circuit, they sing: "All you who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia." The lighted candles represent the illumination received in the initiatory mysteries, while the triple circling of the font signifies eternal union (circle = eternity) of the newly initiated with Christ, the Light of the world.

The rest of the ceremony consists in a blessing, the *prokeimenon* (gradual), the epistle (Rm 6:3-11), the Alleluia chant, the Gospel (Mt 28:16-20) *ektenia* (litany) into which petitions for the newly baptized and chrismated are inserted and, finally, the dismissal. Before the sixteenth century, the entire Eucharistic Liturgy was celebrated. Ancient practice had infants receiving Holy Communion (under the form of wine) after baptism. The Latin Church discontinued the practice in the twelfth century. Of all the Eastern Catholic Churches, only the Copts have preserved this venerable tradition, while all the Orthodox, — to their credit — also have.

Eight days after baptism and chrismation, the recipient is again brought to church for a ritual ablution and tonsuring (or shearing of the hair), which signifies submission and servitude to God for life. It is also a symbol of the scriptural offering of the first-fruits.

The Lasting Effects of Chrismation (Confirmation)

A person receives new life (sanctifying grace), the life of God, through baptism. Confirmation-chrismation increases participation in divine life. It may be distinguished from baptism as mature life may be distinguished from birth or infancy. This is why it is said to "perfect" or "complete" baptism. The life of an infant is not the same as that of an adult. The newly baptized, though full Christians, do not share in God's life or its attributes as intimately and intensely as do confirmed Christians. The gifts of strength to profess the faith, and fortitude or courage

best indicate the main purpose of confirmation.

The manifold gifts of the Spirit received in chrismation are symbolized by the great number of aromatic substances, as many as fifty-seven, added to the basic oil in the making and consecrating of the chrism.

Confirmation-chrismation, then, is the personal Pentecost of individual Christians. It changes raw recruits into full-fledged soldiers, ready for spiritual combat, their *sphragis* or mark serving as a sign of their loyal service to God, not only in earthly life but for all eternity.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Eucharist - A Sacrament of Love

The greatest possible human love on earth is but a spark of the divine. God, in his infinite love, established the Eucharist, transforming bread and wine into the living body and blood of Christ, so that he could be united with his faithful followers even before they died. This is holy Communion, a loving union between God and his beloved.

Preparations and Promises

Jesus, realizing how hard it would be to believe in the reality of his presence in the Eucharist, began by proving his divine power and authority through miracles. A large crowd had followed him to a hillside close to the shore of Lake Tiberias. They were hungry and could not obtain any food. After healing their sick, Jesus multiplied five barley loaves and two fishes so as to feed five thousand men, not counting the women and the children.

"They all ate as much as they wanted," and twelve baskets of fragments were left over! While the people did not understand as yet the real purpose of this miracle, they witnessed divine power at work, and were convinced Jesus was the prophet expected from God. *(cf. Jn 6:15).*

Next day, at Capernaum, Jesus asserted his heavenly origin and demanded that his followers believe he was *"The bread that comes down from heaven, so that a man may eat it and not die."* He boldly declared, *"I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world." (cf. Jn 6:32-51).*

The people understood Christ's words literally, for they *"started to argue with one another: 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'" (Ibid. 52).*

If Jesus had intended his words to be taken figuratively, he would have said so. Instead, he insists: *"I tell you most solemn-*

ly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. This is the bread come down from heaven; not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever'' (Jn 6:53ff).

When many disbelieved and walked away, Jesus did not retract, nor did he call them back to say they misunderstood him: No, he knew they interpreted his words literally and rightly. In fact, turning to his apostles, he asked if they too wanted to go away. He demanded their complete faith and trust without softening his teaching. He did not even explain how it would be possible: the apostles took him at his word and believed.

Institution of the Eucharist

What Jesus had promised the year before at Capernaum, he fulfilled at the Last Supper. St. Matthew who was there records it in this way: *''Jesus took some bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to the disciples. 'Take it and eat,' he said 'this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and when he had returned thanks he gave it to them 'Drink all of you from this,' he said 'for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is to be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins''' (Mt 26:26 ff).*

Jesus clearly said *''this''* (what he held in his hand) *''is my body,''* and *''this is my blood.''* There is no valid interpretation of his words except the literal; Jesus really transformed the bread and wine into his body and blood. He did not say, ''This takes the place of (or stands for, represents, shows) my body,'' nor did he say ''This is a figure (or likeness, representation, symbol, memorial) of my body.'' He said ''This *is* my body — this *is* my blood.''

In an act of such supreme importance, Jesus chose to use these words in their obvious meaning — which led to so many

of his followers leaving him at Capernaum. Had the bread and wine been mere symbols he would have been proposing idolatry.

Paul describing the Last Supper and its commemoration at Corinth took the words of Christ in their literal sense. *"The blessing-cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ, and the bread that we break is a communion with the body of Christ" (1 Co 10:16).* He also condemned the abuses of the Christian community at Corinth, especially in connection with the Eucharist and its unworthy reception by some: *Anyone who eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be behaving unworthily towards the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Co 11:27);* and *"A person who eats and drinks without recognizing the Body (of Christ) is eating and drinking his own condemnation" (1 Co 11:29f.).* Paul was expressing his own faith and that of the other apostles in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Had the Eucharistic bread and wine been mere figures of Christ's body, receiving them unworthily could not have been grievous offense.

Testimony of the Early Fathers

About ten years after St. John composed his Gospel, St. Ignatius wrote to the Church of Smyrna: "The Docetists abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not believe that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ who suffered for our sins and whom the Father, out of his goodness, has raised from the dead" ("To the Smyrnians," 7).

He also urged the Christians of Philadelphia to "partake of the one Eucharist, for one is the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one the cup to unite us with his blood. (" To the Philadelphians," 4).

About fifty years later, St. Justin Martyr declared "The food which has been made the Eucharist by the prayer of his word...is the flesh and blood of this Jesus who was made flesh" ("Apology" I, 66). And Clement of Alexandria "'Eat my flesh,' he (God the Word) says, 'and drink my blood.' Such is the food suited to one's needs which the Lord ministers; he offers his flesh, pours forth his blood, and nothing is lacking..." ("Paedag." I, 6, 41) And again Origen; (c. A.D. 185-254):

"Then, (in the Old Testament), in an enigmatic way, manna was food, but now, as he himself says, 'My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink'" ("Homily 13, on Exodus," 3).

Later testimony could fill a volume without one dissenting opinion. We shall quote only St. Cyril who had preached a whole lecture "On the Body and Blood of Christ" at Jerusalem in A.D. 348. "Consider therefore the bread and wine, not as bare elements, because they are Christ's body and blood according to the Lord's own assertion...Judge not the matter from the taste but from faith; be completely certain, without any misgiving, that you have been given the body and blood of Christ." "What seems to be bread is not bread, though it tastes like bread, but is the body of Christ, and what seems to be wine is not wine although it taste like it, but is blood of Christ" ("Cat." XXII 3, and 6).

The pagans accused the early Christians of cannibalism and ritual murder because they misunderstood such Christian phrases as "partaking of the sacred body and most precious blood." Yet, in spite of all the fury, scorn and contempt heaped against them, not once did a Christian writer explain away the Eucharist as only a symbol or figure of Christ's body and blood. This in itself is proof enough that the early Christians believed in the Real Presence.

The Miraculous Transformation

The early Fathers used various expressions to define the miraculous transformation of common bread and wine into Christ's body and blood. St. Gregory of Nyssa writes that the bread and wine are "transelemented" into the body and blood of Christ; Chrysostom, that they are "transformed", Cyril of Jerusalem and John Damascene, that they are "transmuted"; and Cyril of Alexandria, that they are "converted," Whatever the expression, early Eastern theologians always understood that the *ousia* or entities of the bread and wine are changed into the *ousia* or entities of Christ's body and blood.

By the thirteenth century, the Latin Catholic Church settled on the term "transubstantiation," meaning that the substance of bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ,

while the appearances and external properties remain unchanged.

Only after the first Ecumenical Council (A.D. 325) was an attempt made to determine the exact moment in the Eucharistic Liturgy when the transformation took place. Ambrose at Milan, Chrysostom at Antioch, Sarapion in Egypt and Gregory of Nyssa in Asia Minor agreed that it occurred at the words of consecration: *This is my body....This is my blood.''* To quote St. John Chrysostom: ''It is not man who causes the offering to become the body and blood of Christ, but the same Christ who was crucified for us. The priest stands representing him uttering those same words, but this power and grace is from God. He says, 'This is my body.' This statement transforms the offerings.''

In the fourth century, the role of the Holy Spirit began to be stressed. As the incarnation had come about through the power of the Holy Spirit, so also does the eucharistic transformation of bread and wine. Hence the *epiclesis,* an invocation to the Holy Spirit, was inserted into most eucharistic liturgies. At the time, the epiclesis was not a major point of contention. In fact, the Liturgy of St. Peter, used at Mount Athos as late as the eleventh century, did not have it.

Only later did the true meaning of the epiclesis occasion controversy between Orthodox and Catholics. From the seventeenth century on Orthodox theologians taught that the miraculous change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ occurred at the epiclesis, while the Slav Orthodox held either this opinion or that the words of institutions *(This is my body...this is my blood)* and those of the epiclesis were equally important and necessary to effect the change. The Catholic Church, however, insisted that the consecratory force of the words of institution effected the miraculous change, while the epiclesis made them fruitful. The controversy is senseless, since both sides use the words of institution and the Epiclesis.

The Real Presence

After the miraculous change, the Eucharist *is* Jesus Christ fully present. This presence is very different from any other. Christ is present in some mysterious way in everyone *(cf. Mt 25:40);* he is present in another way amid two or three gathered together

in his name *(cf. Mt 18:20);* in still another way, he is present in the Church as it preaches, governs and sanctifies *(cf. Mt 28:20).* In all such instances the faithful encounter Christ in his action and power. Only in the Eucharist do they receive the very same Jesus who is seated at the right hand of the Father, as both Catholics and Orthodox believe. Christ does not have to leave heaven to become really present in the Eucharist in as many times and places as it is being celebrated. What changes is not Christ, but the occasions of his presence. Christ is present under both bread and wine and under each and every portion of either when it is divided up, as long as the appearances of bread or wine continue to exist.

As we have seen, the Byzantines consider their churches as heaven on earth. The heavenly adoration of the Eucharistic Christ is represented by bows and prostrations.

The Byzantine Rites have nothing corresponding to the Latin Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. There is no ritual worship of the Sacrament besides the liturgical celebration. This is probably due to the fact that in the East no doubt ever arose concerning the real presence.

Frequency of Holy communion

Jesus stressed the need for receiving Holy Communion: "*I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you*" *(Jn 6:53).* He did not say how often his followers were to do so. Christians of the first three centuries considered receiving Communion so much a part of the Eucharistic Sacrifice that they never attended the liturgy without partaking. During the persecutions, attendance. was generally possible only on Sundays, but the faithful took the Sacrament home so that they could receive it daily.

In the fourth and fifth centuries, a new devotional spirit emerged in the Eastern Church. Perhaps to correct abuses, preachers began using a language of terror in describing the holiness of the Eucharist. The faithful responded by feeling unworthy and afraid. Chrysostom, for example, complained that, while some people received the Sacrament frequently, others would do so only once or twice a year. The severe penitential

system also reduced the frequency of communion. This was true of both East and West.

Long after the strict "Penitentials" had become obsolete, their spirit remained with the people. Finally, the Church had to legislate the minimum requirement: communion once a year during Eastertime, between the beginning of Great Lent and the Sunday after Pentecost. This precept remains in force today for those who have reached the use of reason. This is part of the divine command to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man *(Jn 6:54)*. Catholics are also obliged to receive Holy Communion when in danger of death. The Church wishes, however, as does Christ, that the faithful receive Communion as ofter as they can, even daily if possible.

In order to encourage frequent Communion, the Church has relaxed its former requirement of fasting from midnight. Today, one must abstain from food and liquids (other than water) for one hour before receiving Communion (not one hour before the Eucharistic Liturgy begins). Water does not break the Eucharistic fast. The sick or infirm may take medicine, either in liquid or pill form, as well as non-alcoholic beverages, such as coffee, milk, fruit juices, etc., before Holy Communion without any time limit.

In the past, many of the faithful kept away from frequent Communion because they failed to make a distinction between dispositions that are strictly necessary and those that are merely praiseworthy. The faithful who is free from mortal sin may receive Communion without confession. Confession before receiving Communion is necessary only for those who have sinned gravely, so that they would not be eating and drinking their own condemnation *(cf. 1 Co 11:27-32)*. Those who feel unworthy to receive Communion because of their venial sins should remember that one of the effects of Holy Communion is the cleansing from daily faults. We should never receive Holy Communion merely out of habit, human respect or just to please others.

CHAPTER XXX

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

"'How can this man talk like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God?'" So thought the scribes when they heard Jesus forgiving the sins of the paralytic at Capernaum *(Mk 2:7ff.)*. They were right: it does take divine power to forgive sins. The trouble was they did not believe Jesus was the son of God. It was as easy for him to cure a man of his paralysis as to forgive him his sins. He did both to prove that he did have divine power.

Not only did Jesus use his divine power *(cf. Lk 7:36-50)*, but more importantly for us, he handed it down to the apostles and their successors.

On that first Easter Sunday John and the other apostles were in a closed room and *"Jesus came in and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and showed them his hands and his side* (to prove to them that it was, indeed, he himself come back from the grave)....*and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' After saying this he breathed on them* (to emphasize that they were receiving the Holy Spirit: breath and spirit is the same word in Hebrew) *and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you retain, they are retained'"(Jn 20:19ff.)*.

By conferring this power on the apostles, Jesus fulfilled his promise made to Peter a year before: *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven" (Mt 16:19)*. The symbol of the keys is good: if someone gives me the keys to his house, he is giving me the authority to use his house in any reasonable way I see fit. Jesus renewed this promise a little later to all his diciples, *"I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven" (Mt 18:18)*.

The Early Church Used the Power to Forgive Sins

The apostles used the power of binding and loosing during their days on earth.* The Epistle of James proves that confession was practiced at the time: "*If he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. So confess your sins to one another*" *(Jm 5:15f.)*.

The apostles' successors believed and practiced the same as is shown in the earliest Christian documents. The "Didache," written near the end of the first century, bids Christians to assemble on the Lord's day to pray and to break bread, that is, to attend the Eucharistic sacrifice, "but after first confessing your sins, so that your sacrifice may be pure" (c. 14). "In the church-assembly confess your sins and do not come to your prayer with a guilty conscience" (c.4). Barnabas, also one of the earliest Christian writers, uses almost the same words: "Confess your sins; you shall not go to prayer with an evil conscience" ("Catholic Epistle," 19). Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch who was killed for Christ about A.D. 107, writes: "To all who repent, the Lord grants forgiveness, if they turn in penitence to the unity of God and to the council of the bishop" ("To the Philadelphians," 8). About a half-century later, Polycarp advises priests to be merciful to those they bring back to Christ: "Be not severe in judgment, for we know that we are all under the debt of sin; if, then, we entreat the Lord to forgive us, we ought also ourselves to forgive, for we are before the eyes of the Lord and God" ("Phil". 6).

Many other examples of early Christian reconciliation can be given (by writers such as Irenaeus, Epiphanius, etc.). Later testimony is vast, proving beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Church has always used the power of forgiving and retaining sins, because it always believed this power had been given not only to the apostles but also to their successors *for all time*.

Priests and bishops do not forgive sins by their own power. They are mere instruments of God and act through his power and authority, as did the apostles.

**E.g., 1 Co 5:1-13, 1 Tm 1:19f., 2 Co 2:5-11, 2 Co 12:21, 13:1-2, etc.*

What Sins Can Be Forgiven?

Since reconciliation (Penance) is the sacramental mystery by which a repentant sinner receives God's forgiveness for sins committed after baptism, it includes all sins, whatever their nature or gravity. Jesus made no exception when he granted the apostles the power of forgiveness: "*For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven*" *(Jn 20:23).*

On the part of the sinner, however, forgiveness and reconciliation may be impossible because of impenitence. Final impenitence (dying unrepentant) is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and by its nature is unforgivable. Jesus sternly warned the Pharisees who insisted that his miracles were the work of the devil: "*And so I tell you, every one of men's sins and blasphemies will be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven*" *(Mt 12:31-32).*

What is Necessary for Forgiveness and Reconciliation?

Forgiveness and reconciliation are not automatic. Personal, inner dispositions are necessary.

No confessor may act before he hears the sinner acknowledge his wrongdoing, and is convinced of the sinner's repentance. Requirements on the part of the sinner are: (1) *repentance* or sorrow for sin; (2) *actual confession,* and (3) *satisfaction* or performing the assigned penance.

REPENTANCE—SORROW FOR SIN. The Eastern Churches have always stressed true repentance as a condition for absolution. It is the most important of the three conditions. The Greeks had a word for it: *metanoia,* a complete change of mind on the part of the sinner. This includes a recognition of sin, sorrow for it, and a firm determination to amend one's life by a turning away from sin and toward God.

True sorrow for sin must be based on motives of faith: that is, a person must be sorry for his sins because he offended God who is all-loving and all-good, or, on a less meritorial level, because he does not want to be punished in the life to come. When based on love of God, contrition is called "perfect," not because the penitent's sorrow is perfect, but because the motive prompting

it is perfect. Any motive less than that, though still based on faith, is called imperfect.

With perfect contrition, sins, even grave ones, are immediately forgiven by God provided the penitent intends to confess them in his next confession. Imperfect contrition will not obtain the pardon of mortal sin outside the sacrament.

Sincerely *wanting* to avoid all grave sin in the future, is sufficient contrition, even though the penitent may *know* that in all probability he will fall.

CONFESSION. Confession is the actual telling of one's sins to the priest. This includes telling what kind of sin one has committed and how many times one has done it. No confessor can judge whether to forgive or to retain without hearing what sin the penitent has committed (e.g., drunkenness, adultery, blasphemy, etc.), and what the basic circumstances were (e.g., how much money was stolen, whether from a church, from a corporation, from a poor person, etc.). On the other hand, one should not go into useless detail about the sins confessed. Once a grave sin is confessed for which absolution was given, it need not ever be confessed again.

If the penitent does not remember the number of times he has committed the same sin, he should give a sincere estimate or, what may be easier, estimate the average number of times per month he did it. All this, of course, has to do with grave sin. Lesser sins need not be confessed according to their number or kind; in fact, there is no obligation to confess them at all. If one has no grave sin, it is better to confess one or two venial sins for which one is truly sorry and intends to do something about it.

If a person forgets to tell a grave sin in a previous confession, he must tell it, after he remembers it, in his next confession. No one is ever obliged to confess any "doubtful mortal sins" — doubt regarding full deliberation, sufficient consent, knowledge or even doubt whether or not a particular grave sin was confessed before. Church law requires a Catholic to confess at least once a year but, actually, this does not bind those who have only venial sins to confess. Zealous souls, however, will receive this sacrament frequently because of the wonderful graces it imparts.

SATISFACTION, OR PENALTY. Anyone convicted of a crime has

to pay the penalty. Anyone who sins has to atone for it. In the early centuries of Christianity, the penances assigned were often severe, consisting in long fasts, numerous good works, etc. At present, penances, even for grave sins, usually consist only in prayers. The obligation of fulfilling the assigned penance for grave sin, however, is serious; for lesser sins, it is less serious (obliging under venial sin).

Through confession, all sins are forgiven and all *eternal* punishment is taken away. Atonement, however, still has to be made for the temporal punishment due to the forgiven sins, either in this life or in purgatory. Fulfilling the assigned penance either lessens or entirely takes away that punishment. Since the sins may be grave and the assigned penance slight, the penitent himself may want to do additional good works as penance for his misdeeds. The Eastern Fathers, such as St. Gregory of Nazianzus and St. John of Damascus called the sacrament of reconciliation a "laborious kind of baptism," meaning that it restores the sinner to baptismal holiness but only through "laborious" exercises of penance and good works.

The Secret of Confession

What the priest hears in confession he cannot ever reveal to anyone. The seal of confession is greater than any other secret in the world. Many priests were tortured and killed for it, yet they never revealed what they had heard. Godless propaganda never could point to a single violation of the confessional secret!

How to Go to Confession

For those who may have joined the Catholic Church recently, we include a few practical instructions on how to receive the sacrament of reconciliation worthily:

1) First of all, recall all your grave sins at least since baptism or since your last worthy confession; then, be sorry for them.

2) Enter the confessional or some other place set aside for confessions, make the sign of the cross, and tell the priest how long it has been since your sins were forgiven last.

3) Tell your sins as you recall them.

4) The priest may then give you some advice, or ask for clarification. Finally, he will impose the penance.

5) Indicate your sorrow for your sins by such words as, "I am sorry for my sins because they offended God."

6) Do not leave until the priest has given you absolution. He will let you know that you may leave by such words as "God bless you," or "Go in peace."

Eastern Churches generally use the passive formula, "The servant of God, N..., is being forgiven his sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen." The sacramental sign of reconciliation is the penitent's act and absolution by the priest.

CHAPTER XXXI

The Anointing of the Sick

Jesus was merciful and compassionate. All through his public life, he had a special care and concern for the sick. His many miracles prove it. When asked by the followers of John the Baptist whether he was the Messiah, he quoted Isaiah: *''Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor, and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me''' (Mt 11:4ff).*

Jesus also told his followers to be compassionate. In sending them out on a mission, *''he summoned his twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits with power to cast them out and to cure all kinds of diseases and sickness'' (Mt 10:1).* As yet, they were doing these things charismatically; later, he would give them the power to do them sacramentally. Even if we discount similar powers given to them after the resurrection *(''. . . they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover'' Mk 16:18),* we read about the actual anointing of the sick in the Epistle of St. James: *''If one of you is ill, he should send for the elders of the church, and they must anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord and pray over him. The prayer of faith will save the sick man and the Lord will raise him up again; and if he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven. So confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, and this will cure you . . .'' (Jm 5:14ff.).*

The Anointing of the Sick in the Early Church

Priests and bishops of the early Church carried on the practice of anointing the sick, perhaps not as often as today, but at least occasionally.

Ancient Christian rituals (e.g., the third-century ''Apostolic Tradition'' of Hippolytus, the fourth-century ''Sacramentary'' of Serapion, etc.) contain prayers for blessing the oil of the sick.

Ancient Christian authors also write about it: Origen at Alexandria, Aphraates and Ephraem in the Persian Church, Chrysostom, Victor and Isaac at Antioch, Pope Innocent I at Rome, etc.

Many, later texts describe what this sacrament can do for the body and soul of the sick.

Special Effects of the Anointing of the Sick

People often believe that anyone receiving this sacrament is certain to die soon, while in fact bodily health is often restored through it.

The main effects, however, are spiritual. The anointing takes away all sin, even grave sin, for which a person is sorry (or at least has imperfect contrition). This is presumed of a practicing Catholic who is unconscious or in a coma. If conscious and in grave sin, the sick person should make his confession before receiving the anointing. One of the most beautiful effects of the anointing is the removal of the temporal punishment still due for forgiven sins, to the extent that the soul may enter paradise immediately after death, like a newly baptized child.

Other spiritual effects which flow from the gift of the Holy Spirit in this sacrament are: strength and courage to battle the last possible temptations; comfort and trust in God's mercy; patience to bear sufferings, and peace of soul. The spirit of peace and resignation has been noticed many times by doctors and nurses, even non-Catholics.

These effects of the anointing last as long as the disease. A person may be anointed again in the course of the same illness if his condition deteriorates, or if after some improvement there is a relapse.

Who May Be Anointed

Any baptized Christian who has attained the use of reason and is in danger of death by sickness or old age may receive the anointing of the sick. St. James speaks of the forgiveness of sins in the sacrament; this presupposes the use of reason, the ability to distinguish right from wrong.

The sick and aged, even if not in immediate danger of death, may and should receive this sacrament. It is best to call a priest in case of serious illness or surgery. The elderly in a weakened condition may be anointed, even though they have no dangerous illness.

Those in a coma or unconscious may be anointed. Since no one really knows precisely when the soul leaves the body, a priest should be called even in cases of apparent death; he will use his judgment in deciding whether to administer the sacrament conditionally.

The Rite of Anointing

In emergencies (accidents, the actually dying, etc.) the priest performs only the anointing while reciting the essential prayer.

Under ordinary circumstances, the whole solemn office is celebrated. The Byzantine office emphasizes the communal aspect of the anointing. St. James asked the sick man to *"send for the elders of the church"* — that is the priests — and *"pray for one another."* Even today, the Byzantine ritual calls for more than one priest, preferably seven, if they are available (as in monasteries); if not, one suffices. It also presupposes that the rite takes place before an assembly of the faithful.

A small table is readied with the Book of the Gospels, a vessel containing wheat (signifying the embryo of new life, the resurrection, *cf. Jn 12:24 and 1 Co 15:36ff.),* and on the wheat, an empty shrine-lamp. Seven wands wrapped in cotton (one for each of the seven anointings, are thrust into the wheat. Vested in stole and *phelonion,* the priest or priests hold seven tapers symbolizing the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

There are three distinct parts in the ceremony:

(1) The "OFFICE OF COMFORT" modeled on the morning office. It includes a *Kanon,* an ensemble of nine canticles pleading with God to heal the sick, both in soul and body.

(2) THE BLESSING OF OIL. After the oil (pure olive oil) together with a little water or wine is poured into the shrine-lamp, the main celebrant blesses it (each of the other priests present blesses the oil and silently follows the prayer of the main celebrant). The theme of this prayer is the mercy and compassion of the

Lord, and a call to him to cure the sick person. The oil symbolizes God's mercy.

(3) THE ACTUAL ANOINTINGS. Each anointing has its own ceremonial modeled on the Divine Liturgy, with the prayer of anointing taking the place of the Eucharistic Prayer. The theme is penitential.

The seven anointings are made in the form of a cross on the sense organs, forehead, nostrils, cheeks, lips, chest, and both sides of the hand.

In concluding the ceremony, the main celebrant takes the Gospel Book, opens it with the text facing down, and lays it on the head of the sick person. If more than one priest is present, all hold the Book (actually, this is an imposition of hands) while the main celebrant prays for the forgiveness of the sins of the subject.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Priestly Holy Orders

The priesthood is an awesome sacramental mystery. Mere men are given the powers of God to do things far beyond human understanding: in baptism, to change the children of men into children of God; in chrismation-confirmation, to impart the fullness of the Holy Spirit; in the liturgy, to change bread and wine into the living body and blood of Jesus, to offer him as a sacrifice for all, and to give him to the faithful in holy communion in order to sanctify them; in the sacrament of reconciliation, to forgive sinners and bring them back to God; in the ministry, to evangelize and, in the case of bishops, to consecrate other priests so that God's work may be carried on. The other sacred orders convey lesser duties and offices. The purpose of all priestly orders is to make holy the people of God.

The priest perpetuates the work of Christ: he acts in the person of Christ, while Christ acts and lives through him.

Christ Ordained the Apostles

Christ conferred a true priesthood on his apostles: at the Last Supper, he commissioned them to change bread and wine into his own body and blood, and thus, to offer the sacrifice of the New Law. On the cross, Jesus offered himself for the salvation of all; the Eucharistic sacrifice is a continuation of that offered on the cross. On the day Jesus rose from the dead, he gave the apostles the power to forgive sins. Before he ascended into heaven, he commissioned them to go to the whole world, to make disciples of all the nations, to baptize and teach all the nations. The word "apostles" in fact, means "those sent forth with orders."

The Apostles Ordained Others

Paul ordained Timothy by laying hands on him: *"That is why I am reminding you now to fan into a flame the gift that God gave you when I laid my hands on you. God's gift was not a spirit of*

timidity, but the Spirit of power, and love, and self-control'' (2 Tm 1:6-7. Cf. also 1 Tm 4:13-16). In another passage, Paul advises Timothy to be careful in choosing those he ordains: *''Do not be too quick to lay hands on any man...'' (1 Tm 5:22).* Likewise, he counsels Titus: *''The reason I left you behind in Crete was for you to get everything organized there and appoint elders in every town, in the way that I told you: that is, each of them must be a man of irreproachable character...'' (Tt 1:5f.).* ''Elders'' or ''presbyters'' were what we now call ''priests.''

The Priesthood Passed On

The Church from its earliest days believed that the priesthood was instituted by Christ and that it was to be passed on to successors. In the generation after the apostles, Pope St. Clement of Rome writes extensively about this, clearly pointing out that the priesthood was instituted by Christ as a permanent order in the Church, that the apostles appointed successors, and after them, ''other approved men should succeed them in their ministry'' *(cf. First Epistle to the Corinthians, 42-44).* At the turn of the first century, St. Ignatius, the martyred bishop of Antioch, writes repeatedly that Christ lives in his Church through the bishops, priests, and deacons without whom the Church cannot exist (''Letter to the Magnesians,'' 6; cf. ''to the Trallions,'' 3). Ss. Cyprian and Irenaeus taught the same thing many times. Later Eastern Fathers developed the same theme.

The priesthood was to be handed down by means of holy orders, the sacrament by which the priestly office and its powers is conferred together with the grace to fulfill its duties. The sensible sign of the sacrament is the imposition of hands, as we know from St. Paul's Letters to Timothy *(cf. 1 Tm 4:13-16, 1 Tm 5:17,22, 2 Tm 1:6-7).* Since Paul exhorts Timothy to fan into flame the gift God gave him when he laid hands on him *(2 Tm 1:6-7),* Timothy not only received the priestly office and its powers, but also the special grace of God to lead a worthy, priestly life.

Today, the visible sign of the sacrament is the same imposition of hands together with the ordination prayer which, among other petitions, calls upon the Holy Spirit.

Like baptism and chrismation-confirmation, valid ordination to the priesthood cannot be repeated. The priest is a priest forever. The indelible priestly character is not lost even by apostasy or any other sin. The powers resulting from this character are also indestructible. Hence, those sacraments which depend only upon the power of orders are valid and true even if conferred by a deposed, suspended or apostate priest (provided that, in conferring the sacraments, he intends to do what the Church intends). The sacrament of reconciliation also depends upon jurisdiction from the proper bishop, but in case of the dying, jurisdiction is supplied to all priests, in good standing or not.

The Priesthood Consists in Different Orders

In the New Testament, we read that there were bishops, presbyters or priests, and deacons. These are the three basic levels of the priesthood, and that is why this sacrament is called, not "holy order," but "holy orders." The bishops have the fullness of the priesthood and are the successors of the apostles; they form the governing body of the Church. Priests share in the priesthood of the bishops, but not in its fullness since they cannot ordain other priests. Deacons share in the ministry of the priesthood but cannot confer the sacraments, except baptism; theirs is a ministry of service to priests, bishops and people. In Greek, it is called *diaconia*. The diaconate traces its origin to the apostles and, therefore, must have been divinely instituted, for we read in *Acts, "You, brothers, must select from among yourselves seven men of good reputation, filled with the Holy Spirit and with wisdom; we will hand over this duty to them.... They presented these to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them" (Ac 6:3,6)*. Other passages of the New Testaments *(cf. Ph 1:1, 1 Tm 3:8ff.)* also mention the diaconate as a distinct office in the Church. The writings of the Fathers, from the earliest to the latest, confirm this.

Later, the Church added lesser offices, which probably do not have a sacramental character. By the middle of the third century, under Pope Cornelius, there were subdeacons, acolytes, exorcists, readers and doorkeepers. The Eastern Churches had only

two lesser offices: those of reader-cantor and subdeacon.

Celibacy of the Clergy

From its earliest days, the Church had celibate, unmarried deacons, priests, and bishops — like Paul — who wished to love God and serve his people with undivided attention. However, it also had married bishops, priests and deacons. In time, the Latin Rite Church began the practice of ordaining only those who were convinced they were able to lead celibate lives.

In the East, even today, most Catholic and all Orthodox Churches admit married men to the diaconate and the priesthood. The Eastern Churches never saw any conflict between married love and love for God, between the vocation to be father and husband and that of following the call to the diaconate or to the priesthood.

They are, after all, following a scriptual injunction. Paul, in writing to Timothy, bishop of Ephesus, tells him what to look for in a man he wants to ordain a bishop: among other things, the candidate should be a husband of one wife, *"He must not have been married more than once.... He must be a man who manages his own family well and brings his children up to obey him and be well-behaved; how can any man who does not understand how to manage his own family have responsibility for the church of God?" (1 Tm 3:2, 4ff)*. He uses almost the same words to Titus *(Tt 1:6ff.)*. This was a good and prudent policy. A married man is generally more stable, mature and prudent than an unmarried youth.

Perhaps because of the heavy responsibilities of bishops, from the fourth century on, the Eastern Churches began to choose them only from among celibates or widowers.

The Eastern Churches, while allowing married men to become deacons and priests, have as much esteem for celibacy or monasticism as does the Roman Church. They treasure Christ's words of praise for those who give up wife and home for the sake of the Gospel *(cf. Mt 19:29)*; they endorse Paul's opinion about a man being torn in two ways, one to pleasing the Lord and the other to pleasing his wife and they accept his saying, *"I should like everyone to be like me unmarried, but*

everybody has his own particular gifts from God, one with a gift for one thing, and another with a gift for the opposite'' (1 Co 7:7ff.).

Married clergy have been successful in the Eastern Churches. Ordinary sanctity is perhaps easier for married clergy, but heroic sanctity is as attainable for them as it is for celibates, as indicated by the martyrdom of so many married priests behind the Iron Curtain after World War II. Among the few secular priests beatified in our century, one was a married Armenian of Istanbul, Der Gomidas Keumurgian. He was beatified in 1929.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Matrimony, or Marriage

Marriage was born in the very dawn of paradise when Adam woke from sleep to see beside himself the beautiful woman, Eve, whom God had fashioned for him, for it was *"not good that the man should be alone" (Gn 2:18).* Then, *"God blessed them, saying to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth . . . .'" (Gn 1:28); "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and joins himself to his wife, and they become one body" (Gn 2:24).* Their marriage was a contract, approved by God, by which they united themselves in love for the purpose of bringing children into the world, and as a means of mutual help. This was clearly a union of one man and one woman, a monogamous union.

Although polygamy became common later among many races and peoples, monogamy always remained the ideal. Almost all civilizations sensed the sacredness of marriage, and surrounded it with religious rituals.

The Sacrament of Marriage

Christ esteemed marriage so highly that he elevated it to the supernatural dignity of a sacrament. In a marriage between two validly baptized persons, the contract itself becomes the sacrament of matrimony. Only two states are blessed by God with a specific sacrament: the priesthood and marriage. The grace of the sacrament lasts until the union is dissolved by death.

The sensible sign of matrimony is the expression of mutual consent concerning the use of conjugal rights. The contracting parties are the ministers of the sacrament, each spouse conferring it upon the other. The priest is present only as the official witness of the Church and as the conveyor of the Church's blessing.

In inter-ritual marriages (when the bride and groom belong to different Rites of the Church), the marriage must take place in the Rite of the groom; otherwise, permission must be sought

by the pastor of the bride.

Conjugal Love

If the married give a chance to the Christ of Cana, the God of love, he will bless them fully, richly and generously all the days of their lives together. The wedding of Cana, graced by the presence of Christ and his Mother, is the first of that long line of Christian marriages to which Jesus came and continues to come with his mysterious approval. If invited, the great *Chelovikoljubets*, the great "Lover of mankind," will abide with the husband and wife and will teach them the secrets of a totally wonderful, secure, happy and blissful married life.

To describe the love which ought to be found between husband and wife, St. Paul speaks of Christ's love for his church: *"Husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her to make her holy. He made her clean by washing her in water with a form of words, so that when he took her to himself she would be glorious, with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless. In the same way, husbands must love their wives as they love their own bodies; for a man to love his wife is for him to love himself. A man never hates his own body, but he feeds it and looks after it; and that is the way Christ treats the Church, because it is his body — and we are its living parts. For this reason, a man must leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one body. This mystery has many implications; but I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church. To sum up; you too, each one of you, must love his wife as he loves himself; and let every wife respect her husband" (Ep 5:25ff.).*

This is indeed an incomparable vision of what married life should be, a life of self-sacrificing love like Christ's own. It was love that drew the Son of God to his sacrificial death on Golgotha, and it ought to be the same kind of love which will draw a man and woman to surrender themselves to each other voluntarily, completely and unreservedly. Much of marital happiness will depend upon mutual self-sacrifice and love.

Sacrifice is difficult: only love can make it a joy. Love can

transform the unpleasantness of work, so love can transform any hardship in marriage. What is distasteful becomes sweet, what is repellent, attractive if done for a person one loves. If charity-love covers a multitude of sins, love will also cover a multitude of human failings in husband and wife. It will pour the soothing balm of compassion and understanding over what could have been a serious wound.

St. Paul writes that as salvation came to the Church through Christ, so it will come to the wife through her husband, and to the husband through his wife.

It is love that will do this, as it was Christ's love that brought salvation to his Church. Paul insists that husbands love their wives as their own bodies, that they love them as Christ loves his Church, his Mystical Body. Through marriage, a man and woman become one flesh as through baptism we become living parts of Christ's Mystical Body, the Church.

The loving closeness of a married couple affects the lives of those around them, especially their children, by reflecting the loving presence of Christ. The natural outcome of a loving marriage is the begetting of physical life; its supernatural outcome is the giving of the life of Christ's Spirit.

If married love reflects the love of Christ for his Church, there will be pure conjugal love, loyal to the end, many years filled with peace and happiness, children who will be kind and good and, finally, a crown of glory which will last forever.

Christian Marriage is Indissoluble

For parents to raise children responsibly, marriage must be indissoluble.

Jesus was very clear about this: *"Some Pharisees approached him and asked, 'Is it against the law for a man to divorce his wife?'" . . . He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' 'Moses allowed us' they said 'to draw up a writ of dismissal and so to divorce.' Then Jesus said to them, 'It was because you were so unteachable that he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. This is why a man must leave father and mother, and the two become one body. They are no longer two,*

therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united, man must not divide.' Back in the house the disciples questioned him again about this, and he said to them, 'The man who divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another she is guilty of adultery too''' (Mk 10:2-12). Jesus made no exceptions when his disciples asked for further explanation. Paul said the same thing: *''For the married I have something to say, and this is not from me but from the Lord: a wife must not leave her husband — or if she does leave him, she must either remain unmarried or else make it up with her husband — nor must a husband send his wife away'' (1 Co 7:10f).* This has been the belief of the Church ever since.

The Church, however, does allow the separation of husband and wife from bed and board for very grave reasons (such as cruelty, adultery, etc.) but neither of them is allowed to remarry.

Sometimes it happens that, despite the marriage ceremony, the vows, etc., a true, valid marriage never existed from the beginning because some impediment absolutely barred a true union. If this can be proved, the Church through its marriage tribunal (or Church court) can issue an official acknowledgment of that fact; this is called a decree of nullity. Couples with a ''failed'' marriage should see their pastor to find out whether their union had been valid in the first place and whether steps should be taken to obtain such a declaration.

Marriage — A Sacrament of the Living

Marriage is a sacrament of the living, that is, to receive it worthily, the couple must be in the state of sanctifying grace, must have the life of God in their souls. The marriage of those who are in grave sin is valid but does not procure sanctifying grace.

The Marriage Ceremony

The Byzantine marriage service, its ritual and prayers are very ancient, dating back in part to pre-Christian times.

The first part of the ceremony is actually the betrothal or

formal engagement: it consists in prayers and the bestowal of rings. The priest makes the sign of the cross with the ring over the groom's head and puts it on his finger, saying, "The servant of God, N . . ., is being betrothed to the handmaid of God, N . . ., in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen." He does the same with the bride.

Psalm 127 is sung, and the priest inquires, first of the groom, then of the bride, whether each is willing to take the other as husband and wife with free will and firm determination. He also asks each of them if they have not promised themselves to any other.

The marriage ceremony itself is inserted into the Divine Liturgy: (1) The marriage vows, (2) the crowning of the groom and bride, before the *prokeimenon* and epistle; and, after the Lord's Prayer, (3) the removal of the crowns. The crowning dates back to pre-Christian times. The early Church tried to discourage the practice, then tolerated it. Finally, some of the Fathers gave it a Christian meaning. Chrysostom, for example, writes: "The garland that is put on the heads of the bride and groom is a token of their victory: in that they have not given in to the lure of pleasure, they come undefeated to the haven of marriage" ("Homily 9 in 1 Timothy," 2). The people put so much emphasis on the practice that in some places they call the entire marriage ceremony the "crowning."

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Sacramentals

Latin Christian experts make a distinction between sacraments and sacramentals; eastern Christian experts, while recognizing the unique character of the sacraments, never completely separated them from the many other actions and rites (sacramentals) of the Church. The former were called "mysteries" or "major mysteries" and the latter, "lesser mysteries."

The lesser mysteries (sacramentals) are also productive of grace, but are more dependent than the sacraments upon the piety of the recipient, the intercession of the Church, etc. They, too, have some of the characteristics of the sacraments, such as visible sign, verbal expressions, etc.

There are many such lesser mysteries (sacramentals): the blessing of wheat, wine, oil and bread at All-night Vigils which begin all great feast days; the blessing of homes with holy water at Epiphany; the blessing of fruits at the Transfiguration of the Lord; that of flowers at the Dormition (Assumption) of the Mother of God; processions, etc. Some of these are practical, for instance the blessing of travelers, the blessing of cars, and blessings for many other needs of Christian families. All are regarded as vehicles of Christ's presence and action.

Some of the lesser mysteries were explained above. Here we shall confine ourselves to some of the postures and gestures used during prayer.

Signs of Attention and Joy

Standing and facing Eastward was the normal posture of early Christians at prayer. Usually, they built their churches in such a way that, when inside, they would always be facing Eastward.

Besides signifying attention, a readiness to hear and obey, standing is indicative of joy; hence, it is prescribed for Paschal and Pentecostal times and on all Sundays and Holy Days during the year. The joy at these times outweighs the sense of peni-

tence, so deeply felt in the East, which calls for kneeling. This, too, is a tradition reaching back to the early days of the Church as may be seen in Tertullian (A.D. c. 150-240) and the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325).

Praying With Outstretched and Uplifted Arms

Praying with outstretched, uplifted arms is another practice predating Christianity. The pagans did it; so did the Jews. How strongly the Hebrews felt about the efficacy of prayer with outstretched arms may be seen from Moses at Rephidim during the battle with Amalek; lest he become tired and drop his arms, Hur and Aaron held them up all day long *(Ex 17:8ff.)*. Early Christians prayed in the same attitude (cf. Tertullian, "Apology" 24, 5 and 30, 4); they interpreted it as an imitation of the crucified Christ. They also saw it as a sign of intense, concentrated prayer while either standing or kneeling. Today, this attitude is observed mainly by the priest at certain times during the Eucharistic Liturgy.

Perhaps the most usual posture today among Byzantine Christians while praying in or out of church is to have the hands crossed on the chest, probably to show love for God and as an expression of wanting to participate in the merits of the crucified Christ. This is the position of the hands at the reception of Holy Communion.

Signs of Penitence and Intense Prayer

Striking the breast is a gesture of penitence, showing a desire for God's mercy and forgiveness. In the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, the tax-collector stood afar off, beating his breast and pleading, *"God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Lk 18:13)*. Likewise, after Jesus died on the cross, many *"went home beating their breasts" (Lk 23:48)*.

Today, Byzantine Christians use the gesture to express sorrow for sins and penitence, in confession or when praying for God's mercy.

Kneeling, too, is a sign of penance and atonement as it was in the early Church during Tertullian's time, the second-third century (cf. "On Prayer," 23). It is also a sign of intensified

prayer. Jesus, for example, knelt when praying in his hour of need at the garden of Gethsemane *(cf. Lk 22:4)*. Justin Martyr writes in the middle of the second century that the most pleasing prayer to God is that said on "bended knees" or with "prostrate body" ("Dialogue with Trypho," 90).

As a sign of intense prayer, kneeling predates Christianity. The pagans, Roman and Greek, often knelt during their prayers to the gods, because they felt small and helpless before their deity, or unworthy in view of their shortcomings.

The great metanoia *(metania* in Greek means "penance") consists in a complete prostration. If kneeling is a sign of penance and intense prayer, the great metania is a stronger one.

Abraham fell flat on his face before God in worship *(Gn 17:3)*. Moses did the same on Mount Sinai *(Ex 34:8)* to beg forgiveness for his people. Since God manifested himself in power and might, they certainly felt small before him. This feeling made their prayer all the more intense and urgent. The Hebrews were not the only ones to prostrate themselves in prayer: Sumerians and Babylonians did so too.

Jesus and his Church took some non-Christian practices and put them to Christian use. Prostration in prayer was familiar to all, easily understood even by the uneducated.

The Byzantine Church prescribes prostrations during the Great Lent and on other penitential days. Three full prostrations are made on entering or leaving the church during Lent. Full prostrations also highlight the Lenten services of Vespers and Matins. During Matins of the Thursday following the Fourth Sunday of Lent (celebrated on Wednesday evening) two hundred and sixty-five full prostrations are prescribed. In deference to human frailty, some churches reduce this number to sixty-five or a hundred.

Signs of Respect and Reverence

A lesser or small metania is a bow made sufficiently low to bring down the hand to the level of the knee. It is accompanied by the sign of the cross and the words, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner; have mercy on me." During the late Middle Ages, the Latin Church substituted genuflections for the profound bow,

while the Eastern Churches kept it.

There is another form of metania, a simple inclination of the head and shoulders, accompanied by the sign of the cross. It is made many times during liturgical services: every time the three Persons of the Holy Trinity are mentioned; in receiving the celebrant's blessings; in doxologies, etc. Some make it, together with the sign of the cross, to emphasize a particular petition in any *ektenia* or prayer which they want especially answered by God.

PART SEVEN

THE FINAL MYSTERIES

CHAPTER XXXV

Death and Judgment

For unbelievers, death seems final — a return to non-existence. For believers, it is the beginning of a life that will never end. All men will die, and their bodies return to dust, *"For dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Gn 3:19).* At death, the body *"returns to earth as it once came from it"* and the soul *"returns to God who gave it" (Si 12:7).*

The body dies when the soul separates from it. Death is natural, in the sense that the body, being composed of material parts, can decompose and fall apart. But death was not in God's original plan: *"Death was not God's doing, he takes no pleasure in the extinction of the living" (Ws 1:13).*

Had Adam not sinned, none of us would have had to die: *"Sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death and thus death has spread through the whole hman race because everyone* (as descendant of Adam) *has sinned" (Rm 5:12, cf., 2:23-24, Rm 5:21, etc.); "It was the devil's envy that brought death into the world" (Ws 2:24).*

Jesus himself chose to share with all humans the bitter taste of death. He experienced all things that any man could: intense suffering, torture, the death struggle and even the tomb. He did not have to, but he did, probably because there was no more effective way to show how much he loved each of us. It was not easy: he feared sufferings and death: *"And a sudden fear came over him, and great distress. And he said... 'My soul is sorrowful to the point of death'" (Mt 14:34-35).* Yet, he went to it courageously, patiently and nobly. Mocked, laughed at and bleeding in those hours of agony on the cross, he was calmly resigned. One of the last things he did in life was to forgive his killers. If there is a right way for his followers to die, he showed it on Golgotha.

The best preparation for death is a good Christian life. Death often comes when least expected. This is why Jesus exhorted his followers to be alert always, to be ready for the supreme Judge

who may come like a thief in the night *(cf., Mt 24:43-44, Lk 12:39-40)*. Not bodily death but spiritual death was to be feared the most, he taught: *"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell" (Mt 10:28)*.

A Christian, provided he has tried to prove his love and loyalty to God by living a good life, need never be morbid about death. A sincere Christian can even be more confident about God's mercy than the "good" thief when he encountered Christ on the cross. *"Indeed, I promise you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:43)*.

In his farewell speech to his apostles, Jesus talked about his own death and theirs: *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house...I am going now to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you with me; so that where I am you may be too" (Jn 14:1-3)*. That is the way a faithful Christian should regard death as going home to begin living in the place that Christ prepared for his own. St. Paul felt that way and longed to be exiled from the body and to make his home with the Lord *(cf. 2 Co 5:8)*. The faithful Christian ought also to look at death as a sharing in the paschal mystery, a personal sharing in Christ's death so that he may also share in his resurrection. The resurrection of the body and its reunion with the soul will come at the end of the world.

After Death, the Judgment

The word of God says: *"Men die only once, and after death comes the judgment" (Heb 9:27)*. There is no cycle of reincarnation: death ends once and for all the time of testing and merit for each person. After death, no longer can anyone sin or earn merit: *"The night* (of death) *will soon be here when no one can work" (Jn 9:4)*.

The good or evil deeds performed before death will be recognized and judged when the soul separates from the body. This is called the "particular judgment": *"We shall all have to stand before the judgment-seat of God.... It is to God, therefore, that each of us must give an account of himself" (Rm 14:11-12)*;

"For all the truth about us will be brought out in the law court of Christ, and each of us will get what he deserves for the things he did in the body, good and bad" (2 Co 5:10).

That this particular judgment takes place immediately after death can be deduced from the words of Paul, *"I must want to be gone and be with Christ" (Phm 1:23, cf., also 2 Co 5:8).* Here he is confident of receiving his reward immediately after death without having to wait until the "last judgment." This presupposes that his works be acknowledged or judged right away.

This judgment is not to be thought of as a judicial procedure in which God appears as Judge, listens to charges and defense, and assesses the value of a life. It is as much self-judgment as it is God's, a mysterious meeting of God and the soul, a purely spiritual event taking place wordlessly in the silence of eternity. The light of truth suddenly pierces the soul, providing it with crystal-clear insight and knowledge of its own worth or worthlessness. The soul sees the import of all its earthly acts, and how it came to that one final act of life which reflects either eternal love for God or eternal resistance to him. In the light of God's utter holiness and love, the soul clearly realizes and affirms the fate for which it has fitted itself: the deserved and necessary damnation, or the desired purification, or the immediate eternal bliss of heaven.

Eternal Damnation

Many people do not like to think about hell. Many try to deny its existence. The human mind cannot grasp the mystery of evil, so it finds it difficult to understand and accept the necessity of everlasting punishment. If the human mind could understand that mystery, it could also comprehend how God's justice, which stands behind the mystery of hell, can be reconciled with his limitless love. Those who refuse to believe in hell really do not take God and his word seriously.

Jesus often spoke of hell and eternal punishment. He was not an unfeeling, hell-fire-and-damnation preacher. But in his kindness, understanding and deeply felt compassion, he wanted to warn men away from this terrifying fate.

Because Jesus fully understood the horror of evil, he also

recognized the necessity of hell and its terror. This is why he used all means at his disposal, including his own death, to impress upon men the wickedness of sin: "*And if your hand should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life crippled, than to have two hands and go to hell, into the fire that cannot be put out. And if your foot should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye should cause you to sin, tear it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell where their worm does not die nor their fire go out*" *(Mk 9:43:48).*

Jesus spoke often of hell, using forceful examples. St. Matthew's version points to a terrifying punishment in the parable of the darnel (weeds) among the wheat: "*Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers: First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt*" *(Mt 13:30).* Later, Jesus explained the parable: The sower of the good seed is himself; wheat represents the virtuous; darnel, the sinners; the reapers are the angels and the harvest is the end of the world. He ended the explanation saying: "*The Son of Man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that provoke offences and all who do evil, and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth*" *(Mt 13:36-43).* A similar fate awaits the man who had no wedding garment *(Mt 22:13)* and the unprofitable, good-for-nothing servant *(Mt 25:30).* The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus also indicates hell as a place of torture and fire *(Lk 16:19-31).*

Hell Never Ends

Two Greek terms are used for the never-ending duration of hell: *aionios,* "eternal" and *eis aionas aionon,* "for ages of ages" or "for eons of eons." The context indicates that they are to be taken literally, meaning duration without end. In the more than seventy instances these terms are used in the New Testament, their meaning is always eternity. They are used chiefly about God, but also about heaven and hell.

That the torments of hell are eternal is obvious from Christ's description of the last judgment and the condemnation of the wicked. To the just, he will say, "'*Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation to the world,' but to the wicked he will say, 'Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels*'" *(Mt 25:34, 41).* And indeed, "*they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life*" *(Mt 25:46).*

That the duration of hell is endless is also brought out by other passages, such as the "*fire that will never go out*" *(Lk 3:17)* and the worm which "*does not die, nor their fire go out*" *(Mk 9:45).* St. John confirms this when he says of the wicked, "*and the smoke of their torture will go up for ever and ever*" *(Rv 14:11).*

Kinds of Punishment in Hell

The torment of hell is threefold: the pain of loss, the pain of the senses and the worm of conscience.

Though man cannot now appreciate it, the pain of loss, that is, of banishment from God is by far the most bitter: "*Go away from me, with your curse upon you*" *(Mt 25:41).* Spurned lovers feel only an infinitesimal part of what the damned feel eternally for losing God. Violently but vainly drawn to God, they can never be satisfied, nor can they find distraction or satisfaction in creatures as in earthly life.

The pain of the senses is inflicted by other creatures filled with hatred; the other damned and the devils. Hell-fire, whatever its nature, provides no respite.

The worm of conscience is the endless pain of remorse, of clearly realizing that the damned themselves are to blame for their punishment. This causes relentless self-hatred. It is their "*worm that never dies.*"

All these torments result in weeping and the gnashing of teeth foretold by the Lord.

Who May Go to Hell?

What kind of wickedness deserves such punishment? Christ

answers: deadly sin. No one is damned for a single evil deed, unless it reflects the sinner's decisive, permanent, hostile attitude toward God and neighbor. Certainly, no one goes to hell because he was predestined by God.

God judges, not according to occasional falls, but according to one's whole life. He is just, but also loving and merciful: no one will be punished excessively. Trying to judge another's guilt is folly. Jesus told the chief priests and elders: *"I tell you most solemnly, tax collectors* (regarded by the Jews as great sinners because they represented the Roman oppressors) *and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you" (Mt 21:31).*

When Jesus walked the earth, he was understanding and compassionate to all repentant wrongdoers, whatever their weakness: the woman taken in adultery, the prostitute Mary of Magdala, the thief Dismas. Only the proud and unrepentant who persisted in their hostile attitude, the Pharisees, Scribes and chief priests, remained the object of his unrelenting scorn and condemnation. This should tell us something about hell and who deserves to go there.

Only those who deliberately and knowingly commit great evil and persist in it until the end go to hell. Jesus knows all hearts better than does any other man; he understands whatever weakens the will — such extenuating circumstances as some hereditary taint or temperamental flaw, passion, pressure, lack of education, environment, etc.

The Purification of Souls After Death

Nothing unclean, nothing defiled can enter heaven *(Rv 21:27).* What happens to those who die as friends of God, in grace, but whose souls are stained with venial sins and faults? Or those who die before they have done sufficient penance for the forgiven sins?

The Catholic Church, after years of reflection on revelation, answers that such souls must be cleansed or purified of these last obstacles before they are fit to see God face to face. This is achieved in purgatory, a state, condition or process of undergoing purification.

The Bible does not mention purgatory, nor does it teach anything about it explicitly, yet, purification after death is not a myth. Besides the early Church's liturgy and the explicit teachings of early Christian Fathers, several Scriptural passages strongly suggest the need for it.

The Second Book of Maccabees (c. 165 B.C.), for example, contains such implicit teaching. After a successful battle of liberation, Judas Maccabeus, the commander of the troops, took up a collection of nearly two thousand drachmae which he sent to the Temple in Jerusalem that sacrifices might be offered for the slain soldiers *"so that they might be released from their sin"* and the *"thought was holy and devout" (cf., 12:43-46).* If there were no state of purgation, why have sacrifices offered for the dead, or why pray for them? Those in heaven need no prayers and those in hell cannot profit by them. Non-Catholics question whether II Maccabees is a part of the Canon of the Scriptures, but even as a historical document, it testifies to the traditional belief of God's chosen people: that the souls of the just, though imperfect, can be purified after death, *"be released from their sin."* The Jews still pray for their dead.

Jesus himself said that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit *"will not be forgiven either in this world or in the next" (Mt 12:23).* This implies that some sins may be forgiven in the next world.

Only a few die as obvious saints, the rest go into eternity with at least some blemishes on their souls. There must, therefore, be a process of purging after death.

The Souls of the Faithful Departed Can Be Helped

Death does not sever the bond of mutual love linking the members of the Church. The Church militant, the suffering Church in the state of purification, and the triumphant Church in heaven form one body with Christ as their head. This union is called the "communion of saints."

There is no impassable wall between the living and the dead. As the saints in heaven, by their intercessions before God, can influence the salvation of those still on earth, so the faithful on earth can offer good works, prayers and especially the Eucharistic Sacrifice for the beloved departed in the conviction that,

if they are still in the state of purgation, they may be helped in some way.

Ancient inscriptions and some of the early Fathers and writers of the Church, from both East and West, attest to the practice of praying for the dead. In the West, Tertullian (A.D. 160-240) writes "Once a year on the anniversary, we make offerings the oblations at the offertory for the deceased as birthday honors" ("On the Chaplet," 3); "Indeed, a faithful widow prays for the soul of her husband . . . and offers her oblations on the anniversaries of his death" ("On Monogamy," 10).

In the East, St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. A.D. 386) mentions that prayers for the dead were offered after the consecration in the Eurcharistic Liturgy, "because we believe that those souls benefit very greatly for whom supplication is made while the holy and tremendous sacrifice lies before us" ("Mystagogic Cathechesis," V, 9). And the great St. John Chrysostom (d. A.D. 409): "It is not in vain that we have received this tradition from the apostles, that we pray for the dead during the awe-inspiring Mysteries. They (the apostles) knew how greatly advantageous and beneficial to the dead are the intercessions of the whole congregation and priests, standing with hands lifted up before the awesome Sacrifice. Will not God be appeased by our entreaties for them? And this is indeed what we do for those who have departed in the faith . . ." ("Homily III on Philippians," 4).

Almost all of the ancient Eucharistic Liturgies have prayers for the departed faithful. The East Syrian Liturgy of Addai and Mari, one of the most ancient, lists the faithful departed and prays for "all them that in a true faith departed from this world of whom our Lord alone knoweth the names." The text of the Eucharistic Liturgy found in the "Apostolic Constitutions" (4th century A.D.) lists the various categories of the departed and ends with "and all whose names thou thyself knowest" (Book VIII). The Egyptian "Sacramentary" of Serapion (c. A.D. 353-360) also appends a list of the departed after the prayer: "We intercede also on behalf of all those who have been laid to rest, whose memorial we are making."

Present Byzantine Practice

In theory, many non-Catholic Byzantine theologians either do not accept or dispute the concept of purgation after death; yet, in practice the Orthodox pray for their faithful departed. Byzantine Catholics and Orthodox use the same prayers and services for the dead, not only on the evening before the burial,* but also at the funeral in church and at the interment in the cemetery.

These burial services are solemn, lengthy and full of chants and prayers asking God to have mercy on the soul. Particularly moving is the "Anthem of St. John Damascene," sung in eight different mournful tones. It contemplates the fleeting nature of earthly glory and intensely, desperately pleads for mercy and eternal life for the departed soul. Another moving highlight is the "Last Farewell": when the casket is opened for the last time, everyone present files past the remains of the deceased and kisses the cross held by the celebrant as a sign of bidding the last farewell to that departed pilgrim. This, too is accompanied by a soul-stirring chant, the stanzas of which are a meditation on death which renders inconsequential all things earthly. Its final words are spoken as if by the deceased:

> "My brothers, friends, relatives and acquaintances, weep for me as you see me lying before you entirely speechless and bereft of breath. Only yesterday I talked with you and suddenly the dread hour of death struck. Come all who loved me and kiss me farewell, for no longer will I ever again walk or talk with you. I am going to the Judge who has no favorites: master and servant, king and soldier, rich and poor are equal in his sight; and everyone according to his deeds will be glorified or condemned. I beg and plead with all of you, pray unceasingly to Christ our God that I be not doomed according to my sins

*This rather lengthy service is called *parastas* by the Ukrainians and Russians; the Greeks call it *parastesimon e trisagion;* the Melkite Arabs, *tresogion* or *niahat*. To this is appended a much shorter service which is often celebrated independently, called the *panakhida* by the Ukrainians and Russians, the *pannukis* or *agrupnia* by the Greeks, and *salaat al-amwaat* by the Melkites.

unto a place of torment, but that he will admit me where the light of life is."

Who could not be touched by these words as the deceased lies there holding a cross to indicate that he believed in Christ Jesus and gave up his soul to him? Around the coffin flickering candles signify the immortality of the soul.

Over and over again in the services for the dead occur the petitions: "Again and again let us pray for the repose of the soul of the departed servant of God (N.) and that he (she) be forgiven every sin both wilful and not;" "That the Lord God may admit his (her) soul into the place where the just repose;" "For the mercy of God, the kingdom of heaven and the forgiveness of his (her) sins, let us ask Christ, our immortal King and God."

Byzantine Christians, Catholic and Orthodox, continue their intercessions for their beloved dead after the funeral services. Many people have services celebrated together with the Eucharistic Liturgy, especially (1) on the third day after the funeral in memory of Christ's resurrection on the third day, (2) on the ninth day, in petition that the deceased may join in the nine choirs of angels in heaven, (3) on the fortieth day in memory of Christ's ascension forty days after rising from the dead, and (4) at every anniversary to signify that through the communion of saints the faithful on earth are not forgetting those who are sleeping in death. After such services, a common meal, or at least some food, is offered as alms in the name of the deceased. In addition to praying for the dead at every Eucharistic Liturgy, the Byzantine Church officially sets aside five Saturdays of the year in their honor* and in some churches, services for the dead are held every Wednesday and Friday of Lent. It is customary for every family of the parish to inscribe the names of their beloved dead in a special diptych booklet. Services are offered for those inscribed, and each name is read out publicly.

At least once a year, either on Pentecost or on the feast of the parish patron (depending upon local custom), the whole parish gathers in the cemetery where services are celebrated at

*These are: the Saturday before Meat-fast Sunday, the second, third, and fourth Saturdays of Great Lent, and the Saturday before Pentecost.

individual graves. In addition, there are frequent requests by relatives and friends for public services for the dead.

CHAPTER XXXVI

The Final Destiny of the Just

Parousia: it means the second coming of Christ in glory as Lord and Judge at the end of the world. Jesus himself promised he would return: *"For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behavior" (Mt 16:27).* And, again, at his trial before the assembled chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin: *"And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mk 14:62).*

Jesus had described the event about a week earlier *"But in those days...the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will come falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory; then too he will send the angels to gather his chosen from the four winds, from the ends of the world to the ends of heaven" (Mk 13:24-27).*

Jesus, however, did not reveal exactly when this awesome event would take place: he clearly said that, as man, he did not know: *"But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son; no one but the Father" (Mk 13:32).*

Some passages of the Scriptures suggest that ours is the last age. Others do not. Being prophetic in character, these passages like all prophecies bear little relationship to the succession of time. It is far from clear, too, which words are to be taken literally and which figuratively. Certain signs, however, will precede the event, as Jesus warned: *"Take care that no one deceives you; because many will come using my name and saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars; do not be alarmed, for this is something that must happen, but the end will not be yet. For nation will fight against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes here and there. All this is*

only the beginning of the birthpangs.

"Then they will hand you over to be tortured and put to death; and you will be hated by all the nations on account of my name. And then many will fall away; men will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise; they will deceive many, and with the increase of lawlessness, love in most men will grow cold; but the man who stands firm to the end will be saved.

"This Good News of the kingdom will be proclaimed to the whole world as a witness to all the nations. And then the end will come" (Mt 24:4-14).

St. Paul recounts a similar general apostasy: *"It cannot happen until the Great Revolt has taken place and the Rebel, the Lost One, has appeared. This is the Enemy, the one who claims to be so much greater than all that men call 'god,' so much greater than anything that is worshipped, that he enthrones himself in God's sanctuary and claims that he is God" (II Th 2:3-4).* But perhaps this sign has already appeared for Paul goes on to say, *"And you know, too, what is still holding him back" (Ibid, 6),* but he gives no further explanation.

The destruction of Jerusalem is another sign, but this already happened in A.D. 70 at the hand of Titus. Another although vague sign is the conversion of the Jews *(cf., Rm 11:25-27).*

No one knows when Christ's second coming will take place. It will be a surprise, unexpected like a thief in the night *(I Th 5:2).*

The Resurrection of the Dead

When Christ comes in glory, the dead will rise from their earthly resting places, both the saved and the damned. Jesus promised it: *"Do not be surprised at this, for the hour is coming when the dead will leave their graves at the sound of his voice: those who did good will rise again to life and those who did evil, to condemnation" (Jn 5:28-29).* Here Jesus speaks of bodily resurrection, for he says that the dead shall leave their *graves.* Devout Jews believed in the resurrection of the dead on the last day. This is evident from Mary's words about her brother Lazarus *(cf., Jn 11:25).*

The resurrection will be quick: *"This will be instantaneous, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet sounds. It will sound, and the dead will be raised, imperishable" (1 Co 15:52-53).*

The Greeks found this as hard to believe as the resurrection of Christ. Some accepted Christ's resurrection from the dead, but not that everyone will rise on the last day. To these, Paul replies: *"Now if Christ raised from the dead is what has been preached, how can some of you be saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ himself cannot have been raised, and if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is useless and your believing it is useless...." (I Co 15:12-14).*

Paul insists: *"He who raised the Lord Jesus to life will raise us with Jesus in our turn" (2 Co 4:14); "When we were baptized we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life.... But we believe that having died with Christ we shall return to life with him: Christ, as we know, having been raised from the dead will never die again. Death has no power oven him any more" (Rm 6:4, 8-9).*

With What Kind of Body Will They Be Resurrected?

Paul explains the resurrection of the dead: *"Some may ask, 'How are dead people raised, and what sort of body do they have when they come back?' They are stupid questions. Whatever you sow in the ground has to die before it is given new life....*

"It is the same with the resurrection of the dead: the thing that is sown is perishable but what is raised is imperishable; the thing that is sown is contemptible but what is raised is glorious; the thing that is sown is weak but what is raised is powerful....

"Or else, brothers, put it this way: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: and the perishable cannot inherit what lasts for ever.... the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed as well, because our present perishable nature must put on imperishability and this mortal nature must

put on immortality'' (1 Co 15:35-36, 42-43, 50, 52-53).

All resurrected bodies will be raised *entire;* hence, even if someone had lost a limb or limbs through accident or amputation, his risen body will be whole. Nothing will be missing, nothing will be added. The resurrected will still be human, still the same individuals they were before earthly death: *''Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have'' (Lk 24:39).* Indeed, the risen shall not lose their *identity* or individual personality; they will be essentially the same persons they were before. Finally, all the resurrected bodies will change in that they will be *immortal,* that they will never again die; they will become spiritualized without ceasing to be human, without ceasing to be corporeal.

All risen bodies of both the good and the wicked will be transformed in this way.

The General, Final Judgment

Belief in the general judgment on the last day was such an important truth that the early Christians included it in their earliest professions of faith. The Apostles' Creed, for example, attests that Christ ''sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead''. The Nicene Creed expresses the same truth.

Jesus himself had said: *''When the Son of Man comes in his glory escorted by all the angels...All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, 'Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world.... Next he will say to those on his left hand, 'Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.... And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life'' (Mt 25:31-46).* They will be judged by their deeds, good or evil.

Jesus also described the general judgment in parables: as an

accounting to be rendered by servants to their master; as the marriage feast for which a wedding garment will be necessary; as a harvest during which weeds will be separated from the wheat by angel-reapear — the weeds to be burned in the furnace of hell and the wheat to be gathered into the storage-barn of heaven.

The major point of these parables is that the Lord Jesus will be the Judge: *"God has appointed him to judge everyone, alive or dead" (Ac 10:42)*. Hence, he will judge in the name of God. While the manner of this judgment remains veiled, its light will reveal the whole of human life, all the good and evil ever wrought — not only external acts but internal ones as well. Every word, every thought, every praiseworthy or shameful secret will be laid bare. Each act will be judged in itself, in its antecedents, and in the chain of consequences it set off for better or for worse.

The justice of the Lord will shine, not only in the glorification of the good but also in the condemnation of the wicked. In the full light of that day, their very beings flooded with merit or blame, all will concur with his justice — the good radiating the praise of his grace, the evil darkened by the disgrace of their guilt.

Apokatastasis - The Transformation of the World

The final judgment will close the present order of things: *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea" (Rv 21:1)*. St. Peter described it thus: *"The present sky and earth are destined for fire and are only being reserved until Judgment day.... The Day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then with a roar the sky will vanish, the elements will be burnt up.... Since everything is coming to an end like this, you should be living holy and saintly lives, while you wait and long for the Day of God to come, when the sky will dissolve in flames and the elements melt in the heat" (2 P 3:7, 10-12; cf., also 1 Co 7:31; 1 Jn 2:17)*.

Man's body has to turn to dust before it can be transformed at the resurrection; the earth likewise is to go through a form of death before being renewed. Nature, too, was affected by

Adam's sin, becoming punishment for him and his decendants *(cf. Gn 3:16-19)*. St. Paul says: *''The whole creation is eagerly waiting for God.... It was not for any fault on the part of creation that it was made unable to attain its original purpose, it was made so by God; but creation still retains the hope of being freed, like us, from its slavery to decadence, to enjoy the same freedom and glory as the children of God'' (Rm 8:19-21)*. With this radical transformation or transfiguration, all creation will harmonize with the glorious existence of risen man. Then the victory over sin will be complete. These *''new heavens and a new earth''* seem to suggest that they will somehow become part of the eternal bliss to be enjoyed by the just.

Eternal Life

After the first earth had disappeared, St. John saw in God's vision a new heaven and a new earth. Then, he writes, *''I saw the holy city, and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven.... Then I heard a loud voice call from the throne, 'You see this city? Here God lives among men. He will make his home among them; they shall be his people, and he will be their God; his name is God-with-them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no more death, and no more mourning or sadness'', (Rv 21:2-4)*.

This being immune to defects, pain, suffering and sorrow is called *impassibility*.

Additional qualities of the glorified are apparent from the descriptions of Christ as he was seen by his disciples after his resurrection. The blessed in their glorified bodies, for example, will be capable of penetrating material things, for they will not be restrained by matter in any way (they will have *subtility*, just as the risen Lord did when he went through closed doors). They will also be able to move from place to place in an instant, body and all, merely by an act of the will *(agility)*. And, of course, their bodies will show outwardly the bright, refulgent beauty of their soul.

Chrysostom described some additional joys of the blessed. Heaven, he wrote, is ''where there are neither cares nor labor; auguish nor fears of mind but only the wish to please God which

is full of delight.... In heaven all is peace, joy, gladness, pleasure, goodness, gentleness; no longer any competitive spirit or envy, no sickness or death whether of the body or of the soul. There is no darkness or night of spirit but all is endless day, light and serenity. In heaven it is not possible to be weary; not possible to be satiated'' (Homily VI on Hebrews, 10).

Nothing in man's experience on earth comes close to eternal bliss: *''The things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him'' (1 Co 2:9).*

Since the Scriptures speak of heaven as a kingdom or a city, the New Jerusalem, there is a social dimension to eternal happiness. The citizens of the New Jersusalem live as distinct persons, recognizing each other, knowing and being known, meeting and communicating nor only in their vision of God but among themselves. One of the joys of heaven is that people who loved on earth will love much more intensely in heaven, though there will be no marrying nor being given in marriage *(cf., Mt 22:30).*

St. John hinted at what is most important in heavenly bliss: *''My dear people, we are already the children of God, but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is'' (1 Jn 3:2).* St Paul writes that love will exist forever *(1 Co 13:8)* and will figure in the final perfection of the just, but in much higher form than on earth: *''Now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror; but then we shall be seeing face to face. The knowledge that I have now is imperfect; but then I shall know as fully as I am known'' (1 Co 13:12).*

On earth, God is dimly reflected in the goodness and beauty of his creatures. When God is clearly known, seen face to face, there will be total reciprocal love, total union without any loss of identity. As seen above, the Byzantine Church calls this ultimate union of the blessed with God *theosis,* ''deification'' or ''divinization,'' and St. Peter, *''sharing the divine nature'' (2 P 1:4).* This process, begun on earth through baptism, is perfected in heaven.

The union of the blessed with God differs from the hypostatic

union, the union of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity with human nature in Christ. In Christ, there is one divine Person having two natures. Deified man will never become a divine Person: he will remain forever an independent human person, but he will be transformed by sharing in the divine nature. What the Holy Trinity is by nature, deified man, within the limits of his capacity, will receive by grace — and his capacity depends upon his merit.

The Eucharistic Christ is present on earth wholly and entirely in the Communion bread. After that bread is broken, he is also present in each fragment. Something similar but equally as mysterious takes place in each of the blessed after deification in heaven. God in all his fullness unites himself with the complete being of each one of the blessed, and each complete being is united with "all" of God.

God in his whole and entire being is united with every one of the blessed and enjoyed by them in the measure of each one's merit. That is the divinization of man, that is eternal life, and that is heaven.

The Byzantine Liturgy
of
St. John Chrysostom

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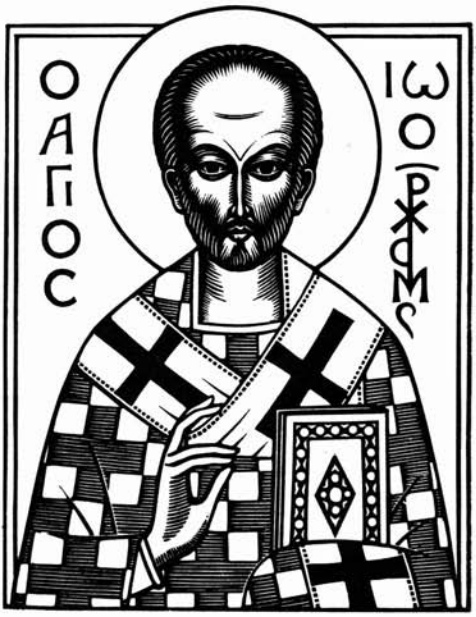

PHILIP HAGREEN

APPENDIX

THE BYZANTINE LITURGY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is the usual Sunday celebration in the Byzantine Churches.

I. PREPARATION RITE

During the *prothesis* or *proskomedia,* the priest, after ritual vesting accompanied by prayers, prepares the bread and the wine for the celebration of the liturgy, to the accompaniment of invocations and incensing. This takes place at the preparation table in the sanctuary. It is reminiscent of the divine office, or office of the hours.

II. ENTRANCE RITE

PRELIMINARY: The priest recites Psalm 50 while incensing the altar, the sanctuary, the prothesis, the icons and the faithful. Incensing is a sign of welcome, related to the ancient Eastern custom of greeting guests by offering them ablutions and perfumes. The Psalm of Repentance is an act of contrition, confession and supplication, and may be compared to the Penitential Rite in the Latin Mass.

The priest then reads a silent prayer to the Holy Spirit and the joyful hymn of the angels at Bethlehem *(Lk 2:14),* together with verse 17 of psalm 50. Going up to the altar, he kisses it and the Gospel book: the altar, because it is the table of sacrifice at which the Eucharist will be offered; the Gospel book, because it contains the Saviour's words.

EKTENIA OF PEACE: The priest formally begins the Divine Liturgy by making the sign of the cross over the altar with the Gospel book, while solemnly singing to the glory of God. The people respond by the acclamation, *"Amen!"*

The priest or the deacon then chants the *ektenia,* or litany of peace. Every *ektenia* is a series of petitions, ending with a

doxology* praising God. Intercessions are made here for many human needs: salvation, the welfare of the Church and all of its members, the Holy Father, bishops, priests, deacons; civil authorities, the welfare of the country and city; various needs of God's people, deliverance from evil and the protection of life. It ends with a commemoration of the Mother of God and a doxology.

To each petition, the people respond, *"Lord, have mercy!"* Often quoted in the Scriptures *(cf. Ps 50:1; Tob 8:10; Jud 7:20; Mt 9:27 and 15:22; Lk 17:20),* this exclamation asks God to show his kindness to his beloved people. For centuries, the Latin Church sang it in Greek: *"Kyrie eleison!"* Before the era of St. Gregory the Great (590-604), this was also used as the response in a litany. In the present Roman Mass, the general intercessions, or prayer of the faithful, have taken the place of litanies.

ANTIPHONS: The choir sings three or four verses from the psalms. The people respond with antiphons, refrains to Jesus or his Mother. Originally, the psalms were chanted in full: now they are shortened, resembling the responsorial psalms in the Mass. Each of the antiphons is accompanied by a silent prayer by the priest and a short *ektenia.*

On ordinary Sundays, Psalm 65:1-4 is sung; on weekdays, verses from Psalm 91. The refrain or response remains the same: *"Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Saviour save us!"* All major feasts of the Lord have proper festive antiphons.

HYMN OF THE INCARNATION: This hymn is sung after the first antiphon. It begins with the words, *"O only-begotten Son and Word of God,"* and is a good summary of the truths we hold concerning Christ as Son of God and Son of Man. It was composed in the sixth century to counter the Nestorian heresy that denies that Christ has two natures, the divine and the human.

This hymn is followed by a short *ektenia.*

*The doxology — litterally, "words of praise" — individually mentions the three Persons of God. Often used in the divine liturgy, doxologies are intended to give praise to God and to counteract several heresies by means of an emphatic proclamation of faith in the Trinity.

THIRD ANTIPHON: The people sing Psalm 94:1-2 as an invitation to praise God with joy. On Sundays, the refrain is:

"O Son of God, risen from the dead,
save us who sing to you: Alleluia!"

On weekdays:

"O Son of God, wonderful in the saints,
save us who sing to you: Alleluia!"

LITTLE ENTRANCE: Near the end of the third antiphon, the Little Entrance takes place. Led by servers with lighted candles, the priest or deacon holds the gospel book over his head. They move in procession around the altar. Then, holding the book higher, he intones, *"Wisdom! Let us stand."*

ENTRANCE HYMN: The cantors sing the troparion and kontakion, short prayers expressing the theme of the feast or celebration. (They may be compared with the opening prayer, or collect, of the Latin Rite Mass.) Often, a third hymn, or *bohorodichen* is added in honor of the Mother of God.

TRISAGION: During the hymn, the priest says the prayer of the trisagion to himself. Then he intones the doxology, and the trisagion is sung.

"Holy God,
Holy Mighty One,
Holy Immortal One,
have mercy on us!"

Dating back to the Council of Chalcedon in A.D.451, it is one of the most frequently used themes in the Byzantine Churches. It is also still used in the Latin Rite during the veneration of the cross on Good Friday.

On Christmas, Theophany (Epiphany), Easter and Pentecost — days set apart for the celebration of solemn baptism — a different anthem is sung, based on Galatians, 3:27:

"All you who have been baptized into Christ
have put on Christ. Alleluia!"

On the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14) and on the Third Sunday of Lent (Sunday of the Adoration of the Cross), the anthem is:

"We bow before your cross, O Saviour,
and we glorify your holy resurrection."

III LITURGY OF THE WORD

BLESSING AND PROKIMENON: To prepare the people for the readings, the priest blesses and exhorts them: *"Let us be attentive! Peace be to all! Let us be attentive!"* This peace greeting comes from the Hebrew *Shalom* and is found many times in the Scriptures. It was Christ's favorite greeting to his own people after the resurrection *(cf.Lk 24:36; Jn 20:18,27)*. Then the cantors sing the *prokimenon,* a Greek word meaning "prelude," because it comes before the scriptural readings. It is now reduced to one or two verses from the Psalms or the Prophets, commemorating the saint or feast of the day.

Originally, the whole text was chanted, but later, probably in the fifth or sixth century, it was shortened. The origin of the prokimenon may be found in the synagogue singing of psalms when the scriptural scrolls are being put away. In the Latin Rite, the Responsorial Psalm is now sung after the first reading.

The Christian Liturgy of the Word, like the synagogue service on which it was based, had readings from the Old Testament Law and Prophets. In the Byzantine Rite, these readings were omitted some time during the eighth century, but they are still used in the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts and during solemn Vespers. A reading from the Old Testament was reintroduced in the Latin Rite after the Second Vatican Council.

EPISTLE: Before the priest announces the selection of the reading from the Epistles, the priest proclaims, *"Wisdom!"* calling to mind the wisdom contained in the text. After giving the title of the reading, the priest continues; *"Let us be attentive!"*

The Epistles are letters from the apostles to the congregations they founded. These letters were read to the faithful at the Sunday service. The bishop or priest would say in effect, "We have received a letter from the Apostle Paul (or from Peter, James or John). Listen as it is being read to you." Copies of these letters were then forwarded to other congregations. In time, the portions to be read were carefully determined so that

all could be read in the course of the year. Excerpts from the Acts of the Apostles were also included.

ALLELUIA: After the reading, the priest incenses altar, sanctuary and people, while the people sing the threefold *"Alleluia!"* The Jewish people used this expression as a cry of praise and joy to God. It means, "Praise the Lord!" In the ancient Christian Church, it was used sparingly and only on the most solemn occasions. The exclamation coming just before the gospel is the people's way of expressing their joy because they will soon be hearing the words of the Lord himself. The singing accompanies the gospel procession.

GOSPEL: Like the Greek *evangelion,* our English word "gospel" also means "good news." It comes from the Anglo-Saxon words *god,* or "good," and *spell,* or "tell." Jesus himself used the expression when he first appeared in public at the synagogue in Nazareth *(cf. Lk 4:16:18).*

The priest prepares himself to announce the Good News by means of a prayer in which he asks God for enlightenment and strength. Again, he invites the people to stand and listen carefully. He also imparts a peace-greeting and a blessing to all. They respond, *"And with your spirit,"* which means, "And also with you." Immediately before and after the reading, the people sing: *"Glory be to you, O Lord, glory be to you!"*

Like the epistle readings, the gospel selections are arranged in such a way that the Four Gospels will be read entirely in the course of the year. Each selection relates either some outstanding event in Jesus' life or one of his teachings. The Latin Church and several other Christian Churches have now adopted a lectionary which presents the principal texts in the course of three years.

HOMILY: The homily or sermon preached after the gospel is as much part of the liturgy as the readings. It reaches back to the Jewish Sabbath service where there was always an explanation following the reading of the Scriptures. St. Luke shows us Christ commenting in this way *(cf. 4:16-22).*

INTERCESSIONS: Carrying on the unbroken tradition of the earliest

Christians, the Byzantine Liturgy has the general intercessions immediately after the homily. This is the Insistent Ektenia. Its petitions keep building up into a crescendo of urgency, culminating in the threefold cry for mercy for the people. The very multiplication of the response is intended to compel divine attention.

This litany embraces every class of society, the Church-leaders, priests, religious and people — the government, the armed forces, the founders of the local church and its benefactors. There is also a petition for the special intention for which the liturgy is being celebrated. If it is being offered for the dead, a special litany from the funeral service is appended.

IV LITURGY OF THE SACRIFICE

The *Anaphora* or Eucharistic Prayer is the central part of the Divine Liturgy. Preparation rites lead up to it, and the communion rite follows it.

A) PREPARATION RITES

GREAT ENTRANCE: The people begin singing the Cherubic Hymn. This hymn was introduced into the liturgy towards the end of the sixth century. It is sung to an elaborate melody. According to present-day rubrics, it is divided into two parts, the first preceding the great entrance and the second following it.

The priest prays in silence to prepare himself for the offering of the sacrifice. He incenses the altar from all sides, the gifts and the people. Returning to the center of the altar, he recites the Cherubic Hymn three times silently; then goes to the table of preparation, incenses the gifts, removes the large veil, places it on his left arm and takes the *diskos* or paten in his left hand and the chalice in his right. As the procession moves toward the altar, he follows, singing the commemoration for Church and civil leaders and for the attendant faithful. The procession stops at the main altar, where the priest places the gifts of bread and wine. The people now take up the second part of the Cherubic Hymn.

The offertory procession started out as the simple bringing of the gifts to the church by the people. The present-day cere-

monial was developed by the sixth century. Candlebearers head the procession. All members of the clergy present at the celebration take part, each carrying one of the sacred objects used in the service. In the days of glory of Byzantium at the Cathedral of Holy Wisdom in Constantinople, the many participants formed a triumphal procession, commemorated in the name, "*Great* Entrance."

OFFERTORY EKTENIA: At the altar, the priest chants the Offertory Ektenia exhorting the community to pray in thanksgiving, for the needs of the faithful, and for deliverance from sin, affliction and want. Meanwhile the priest prays silently, beseeching God to accept the sacrifice of praise and the prayers that are being offered by the people. In the Latin Rite Mass, a simplified preparation of the gifts has replaced the elaborate offertory rite of the East.

RITE OF PEACE: After concluding the doxology, the priest blesses the people with the usual peace greeting. Then, as a reminder that the following ceremonies belong to those Christians who have love and peace in their hearts, he exhorts the congregation: *"Let us love one another so that with one mind we may glorify . . ." The people join in: "The Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the consubstantial and undivided Trinity."*

Since apostolic times, the attendants then exchanged the kiss of peace *(cf. 2 Cor 13:12)*. The only vestige of this custom in the Ukrainian Rite is the kissing of the gifts by the priest. If several priests are celebrating, they embrace. In Latin Rite Masses, the faithful exchange handshakes.

PROFESSION OF FAITH: In the early Church, the baptized faithful alone were allowed to recite the Creed and participate in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Since both are about to begin, the priest exclaims: *"The doors! In wisdom, let us be attentive!"* The exclamation remains, although the doors have not been guarded against intruders for the last fifteen hundred years!

While the priest lifts the large chalice-veil over the holy gifts, he and the people sing the Nicene Creed, The lifting of the veil may represent symbolically the revelation of the mysteries to the believers.

B) THE ANAPHORA OR EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

To introduce the most sacred part of the celebration, the priest exclaims: *"Let us stand with dignity, let us stand in awe, let us be attentive, that we may offer the holy sacrifice in peace."* The people respond, *"The mercy of peace, a sacrifice of praise,"* indicating they understand what is about to take place.

The priest blesses the people with an apostolic salutation *(cf. 2 Cor 13:14)*, wishing them the greatest of all God's gifts: *"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you."* They return his wish: *"And with your spirit."*

PREFACE DIALOGUE: The preface dialogue, almost identical in the Latin Rite and in all Eastern liturgies, dates back to the earliest days of the Church. It derives its inspiration and some of its phrases from a similar dialogue which preceded Jewish religious meals, such as those in which Jesus and his disciples often participated.

Lifting up his hands in prayer, as did all early Christians, the priest intones: *"Let us lift up our hearts!"* In other words, let us raise our hearts above earthly concerns, let us free ourselves even from our daily occupations and concentrate on heavenly thoughts, or, as St. Paul put it to the Colossians, *"Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things that are on the earth."* The people respond that there hearts are already where Christ is: *"We have them lifted up to the Lord."*

Then the priest invites the people to show their gratitude to God: *"Let us give thanks to the Lord."* This invitation, used by the Jewish people, in Jesus' time, before a religious meal, brings forth the main idea of the Eucharistic Prayer: thanksgiving. The word "eucharist" comes from the Greek *eucharistia*, "thanksgiving." The people joyfully agree: *"It is proper and just to adore the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the consubstantial and undivided Trinity."*

PREFACE AND SANCTUS: The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom has but one unchanging preface. Like all ancient prayers, it begins by praising God and his greatness: *"You are the ineffable God, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, eternally the same."*

Thanks are given for creation, redemption and all of God's gifts. Finally, thanks are given for the sacrifice which God deigns to receive from our hands, despite the existence of far worthier creatures — *"angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim, who sing the victorious hymn: Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Sabaoth: Heaven and earth are filled with your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."*

While introducing the Hymn of Victory (called *Sanctus* in the Latin Mass), the priest takes the *asteriskos* or "star" in his right hand and touches the paten with it, first on the top, then on the bottom, then on the left and right sides, symbolizing the fact that this hymn should be proclaimed in every corner of the world.

The text is the same as that used in the Latin Rite. The first part, praising the life-giving Trinity, repeats the words of the seraph heard by the prophet Isaiah *(6:3)*. The second part is the greeting by the believing Jews, acknowledging Christ as King and Messiah as they welcomed him into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday *(cf. Mt 21:9)*. *Hosanna,* a Jewish word, may be compared with our modern "hurrah." Since the very beginning of the Church, Hosanna was used as a greeting proclaiming Christ's forthcoming eucharistic entrance. Every eucharistic sacrifice is a renewed coming of Christ, a *parousia,* a new entry into the New Jerusalem.

NARRATIVE OF INSTITUTION: The priest continues the Eucharistic Prayer, recalling the infinite love which promoted God to send his only-begotten Son, so that *"whoever believes in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (Jn 3:16)*. He retells the events of the Last Supper, explaining how Christ willingly gave himself up for the life of the world, how he took bread and wine, and, after giving thanks, blessed and sanctified them. Then, bowing slightly and pointing to the bread, he sings out the words which transform the bread into Christ's body: *"Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you for the remission of sins."* Then, bowing low, he adores the body of Christ.

Bowing slightly and pointing to the chalice, the priest sings out the words which transform the wine into the blood of Christ: *"Drink of this, all of you: this is my blood of the new covenant,*

which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins.'' Then, bowing low, he adores the blood of Christ.

After each consecration the people respond *''Amen!''* confessing that Christ is truly present under the appearance of bread and wine.

ANAMNESIS OR MEMORIAL: The priest silently recalls the death, resurrection, ascension, enthronement and glorious future coming of Christ. With forearms crossed, he takes the sacred vessels and elevates them, making the sign of the cross with them over the altar while proclaiming: *''We offer you your own from what is your own, on account of all and for all.''* In other words, what we undertake to offer to God is not something that is ours, but something that is his already: the bloodless sacrifice of his Son. We thank the Father by celebrating the memory of the Lord who has saved us through his death, resurrection, ascension and second coming. It is because of these redeeming mysteries that we, his Church, can offer this spiritual sacrifice.

The people answer: *''We praise you, we bless you, we thank you, Lord, and we pray to you, our God,''* in gratitude for what God has done for them.

EPICLESIS OR INVOCATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: Until now, the redemptive role of God the Father and God the Son has been stressed. It is time to call upon the Holy Spirit. The actual changing of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is accomplished through the words of Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. They act together, but because of our human limitations, the words of consecration and the calling upon the Holy Spirit must be recited separately. In the Latin Rite, a similar invocation to the Holy Spirit has been inserted in the second, third and fourth Eucharistic Prayers.

The priest then continues to plead in a low voice that the receiving of Christ's body and blood *''may serve for a cleansing of souls, the remission of sins, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the fulfillment of the heavenly kingdom, for confidence in you, and not for judgment or condemnation.''*

COMMEMORATION OF ALL MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH: *''Those who*

have died in the faith, our forefathers, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ascetics and every just soul that has departed in the faith'' All the holy people of God in the state of heavenly glory add their praise to that of God's people here on earth. In a special way, the priest remembers *''the most blessed and glorious Lady, Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary.''* In order to set her above all the saints, the priest sings her commemoration aloud. The people respond with one of the most popular hymns in her honor, set to an elaborate melody: *''It is indeed fitting to glorify you, Mother of God . . .''*

While they are singing, the priest concludes silently the commemoration of the saints, mentioning John the Baptist, the apostles, the saint of the day and all the saints. He prays for the Church Suffering, that is, for the dead *''who have fallen asleep in the hope of being raised to eternal life.''* Then, he prays for the Church on earth, mentioning the bishops, priests, deacons and all the clergy, the civil authorities and their peaceful rule, *''so that we also may lead a calm and tranquil life in all piety and honor.'' (cf. 1 Tm 2:2).*

At the end of the singing of the Marial Hymn, the priest prays aloud in the words of St. Paul *(cf. 2 Tm 2:15)* for those governing the Church. He names the Holy Father, the metropolitan archbishop and the local bishop. The people respond by asking the Lord to remember them too. This is sung slowly, so the priest has time to complete silently the commemoration of the living. He includes all inhabitants of the town or village where the celebration is being held, every city and country place, not forgetting the travelers, the sick and suffering, those in prison, the benefactors of the local church and the poor. The idea of praying for everyone in the Lord's presence after the consecration dates back to the fourth century. It is done in the belief that our prayers will be more readily answered in these circumstances.

The priest concludes the Eucharistic Prayer aloud with a great doxology, to which the people respond, *''Amen!''* This has been the custom since the second century.

C) THE RITE OF HOLY COMMUNION

SUPPLICATION AND THE LORD'S PRAYER: The priest blesses the people and wishes them the Lord's mercy, then recites a litany of supplication as a preparation for communion. Its petitions exhort the people to pray that the gifts which have been consecrated may be accepted by God on his altar in heaven, and that in return he may grant us the gift of the Holy Spirit. The people respond to each petition with the usual, *"Lord, have mercy!"* The litany goes on, asking for an angel of peace, for the remission of sins, for the satisfaction of the needs of body and soul, and for a good Christian death. To each of these petitions, the people respond, *"Grant this, O Lord!"* Many of these petitions date from the fourth or fifth century.

The priest concludes the litany by introducing the Lord's Prayer: *"And grant, Lord, that with complete trust and without condemnation we may dare call upon you, God of Heaven, as Father and say, Our Father . . ."* all sing the prayer, and the priest sings the concluding doxology, *"For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever."* While singing, he lifts up his hands in the manner of early Christians.

After a blessing and a greeting of peace, all bow their heads while the priest recites a silent prayer, addressed, not to the Father, but to Jesus Christ, beseeching him to look kindly upon those who have bowed their heads, and to hand out his gifts according to each one's needs. The following doxology to the Holy Trinity is sung aloud. A prayer for personal worthiness for communion follows.

LESSER ELEVATION: The priest takes the large consecrated particle, called the Lamb, and raises it slightly while singing: *"Let us be attentive! Holy things are for the holy."* All Eastern liturgies have this elevation before communion. The practice, dating at least to the third or fourth century, draws special attention to the forthcoming communion, and to the spirit of holiness with which the Holy One is to tbe received. The people respond: *"One is holy, one is Lord, Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father. Amen" (cf. Phil 2:11).* Then they sing the Communion

Hymn proper to the day, ending with a triple *''Alleluia!''*

BREAKING OF THE BREAD: During the singing, the priest divides the consecrated particle into four parts and places them on the paten in the form of a cross, while saying, *''Broken and distributed is the Lamb of God, he is broken but never divided; he is being constantly eaten, yet never consumed; he sanctifies those who receive him.''* ''The Breaking of the Bread'' is the oldest name of the Eucharistic Liturgy, or Mass. It symbolizes Jesus' Passion and death *(cf. Acts 2:42)*.

COMMINGLING: The priest takes the top particle, makes the sign of the cross with it over the chalice, and says, *''The fullness of the Holy Spirit,''* then drops it in the chalice. This represents Christ's resurrection when his body and soul were reunited.

COMMUNION: The priest takes the bottom particle, professes his belief in Christ and confesses his unworthiness. He then receives the body of Christ and drinks some of the precious blood from the chalice. Meanwhile the people recite the Communion Prayer: *''Lord, I believe and confess that you are the Christ, Son of the Living God . . .''*

In the Byzantine Rite, the faithful receive under both species. The priest drops all the particles in the chalice and invites the people: *''Approach with the fear of God and with faith.''* They respond, *''Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! God the Lord has revealed himself to us!'' (Ps. 117:26-27)*

Using a small gilt spoon, the priest gives each communicant a small particle soaked in the precious blood, saying to each one, *''The body and blood of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ is given to you. N., for the remission of your sins and for everlasting life,''* thus giving each one a personal gift.

Then the priest blesses the people with the chalice containing the left-over particles and says, *''Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance'' (Ps 27:9)*. Redeemed by the blood of Christ, the faithful have ceased to be a rejected people and have acquired the right to be called the people of God. They respond:

"We have seen the true light,
we have received the heavenly Spirit,
we have found the true faith,
and we worship the undivided Trinity,
for it has saved us!"

The priest replaces the chalice on the altar and prays: *"May you be exalted above the heavens, O God, and may your glory be over all the earth."* He takes the chalice, saying silently, *"Blessed is our God,"* then turns to the people, exclaiming, *"Always, now and for ever and ever!"* He returns the chalice to the table of preparation and consumes the rest of the sacrament either then or later.

THANKSGIVING AFTER COMMUNION: The people sing their thanksgiving and praise for having been allowed to share *"the holy, divine, immortal and life-giving mysteries,"* adding the petition that God keep them in his holiness. The short litany is recited, then a prayer expressing gratitude for the sacrament and a request for strength and protection along God's way to salvation.

D) CONCLUDING RITE

DISMISSAL: Succeeding generations have added more and more prayers, so that it is now quite long. First, the priest tells the faithful they may *"go forth in peace." This was probably the original and only dismissal. The people answer, "In the name of the Lord!"*

PRAYER BEFORE THE AMBO: Standing at the ambo, a semi-circular platform before the royal doors, the priest again asks God's blessing on the faithful, and peace for the world, the Church, the clergy and public authorities. While silently reciting a short prayer for joy and gladness, he returns to the altar while the people sing three times: *"Blessed is the name of the Lord, now and for ever and ever" (cf. Jb 1:21; Ps 112:2)*

The priest then imparts the final blessing and they respond, *"Amen!"* He recites a short prayer praising Christ; the people praise the Holy Trinity; the priest faces the people and pronounces the final dismissal: he asks Christ to give mercy and salvation to all, through the intercession of his immaculate Mother, of the apostles, of St. John Chrysostom and of all the

saints. The liturgy ends with the peoples' *''Amen!''* confirming all that has taken place.

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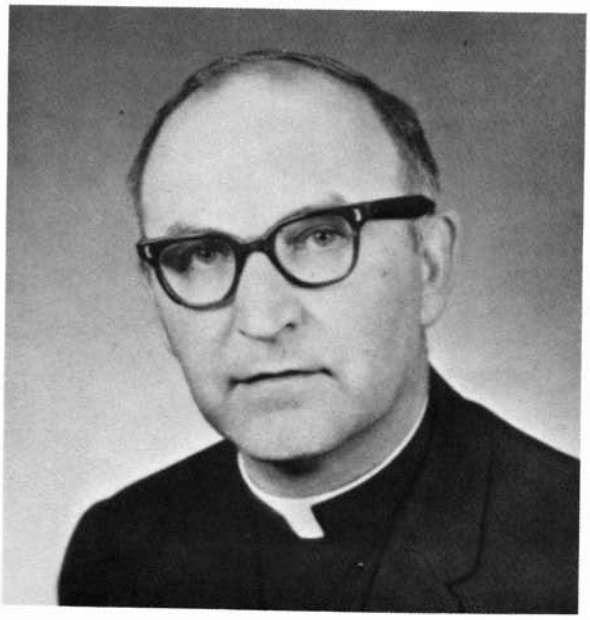

A native of Michigan, Father Casimir Kucharek changed from the Latin to the Byzantine-Slav rite in order to do specialized missionnary work among the Ukrainians of Saskatchewan, Canada. He is a graduate of Maryknoll College, Lakewood, N.J., St. Joseph's Seminary, Edmonton, and the Propaganda University in Rome. In addition to regular courses in theology at the Propaganda, he studied Slavic languages and the Byzantine-Slavonic Liturgy at the Pontificio Collegio di S. Giosafat in Rome.

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